Kathryn Duhamel • Diana Muir • Ian Randall Wilson

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MARCH/APRIL 1998
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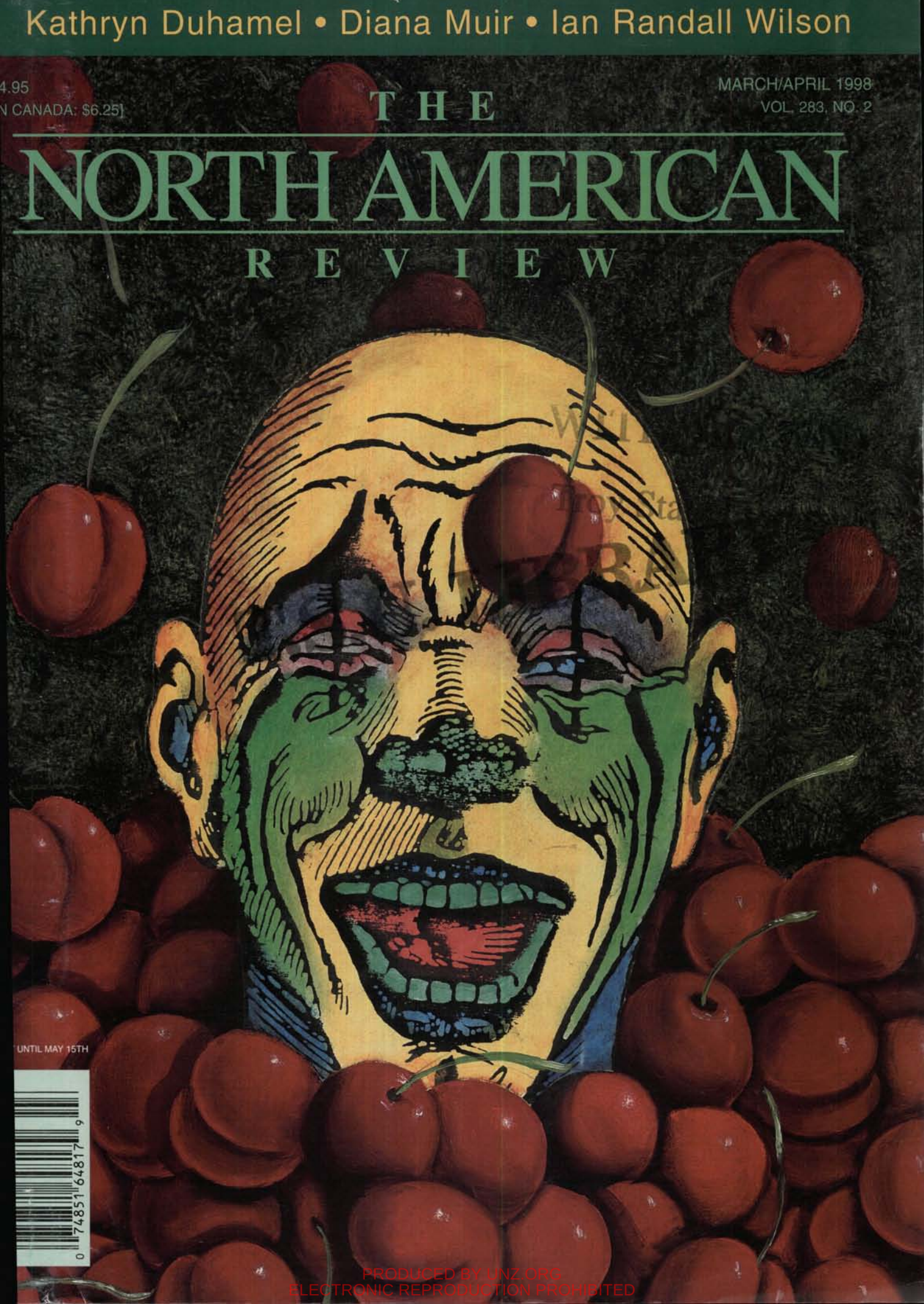
THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW



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Wild Should Wild Remain.

"Man always kills the thing he loves, and so we the pioneers have killed our wilderness. Some say we had to. Be that as it may, I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in."

ALDO LEOPOLD

"We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds . . . It is important to us . . . simply because it is there—important, that is, simply as an idea."

WALLACE STEGNER

"The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach. It is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, (the earth which bore us and sustains us), the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need—if we had the eyes to see."

EDWARD ABBEY

"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness."

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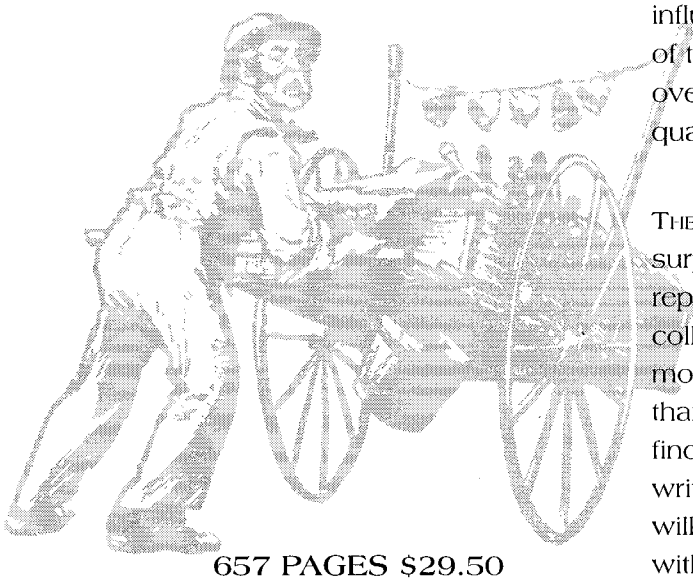

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

■

It is a year of weathers, outer and inner, dominated of course by the unfathomable shadows of El Niño and Kenneth Starr. The former devastates California and Florida but looks benignly upon the North; the latter trashes justice and reason in Washington but hobnobs comfortably with the lunatic Puritan fringe. Foolishness and ego are at war. It is like a carnival sideshow. Where will all this extravagant trivia end? And who is Monica, that all our swains do flee her?

Fortunately, we have weathers of our own, inner and outer as well, beginning with Diana Muir's meditation on hurricanes and ecology (page 4) and ending with Norman Lavers' diary of butterflies and men (page 42). If our readers find nature insufficient, they may turn to an array of fiction that is eclectic to say the least, being long and short, funny and sad, colloquial and elevated. And for the paranoid among us, Perry Glasser muses on the issue of personal privacy in a world where the individual is rare and the database is all.

This number of the NAR features the winning cover in our annual competition—by Roger Bowman, who hails (as serendipity would have it) from Arkansas, home of....oh, never mind....

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REVIEW

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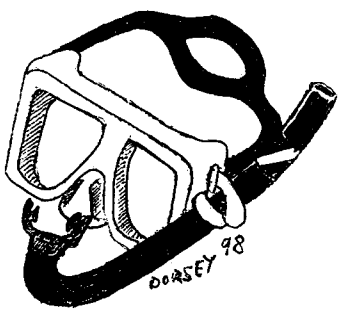
My Mother's Hurricane,
and Further Cautions

DIANA MUIR

TOO FEW NEW PARENTS pause to consider that if they choose for their offspring a name beginning with any letter after about M, the child will never be namesake to a hurricane. I, personally, am gratified that when the Weather Service named a hurricane Diana, it was a good one. No child named Simon or Patricia will ever have that satisfaction since hurricane namers begin every season with A, and by the time they get to Manuel, Nanette, or Orenthal, it's December and that's that.

They started naming hurricanes after the big one in '38, partly because people had not paid much attention to a kind of storm long presumed likely merely to hit Florida, where very few people actually lived before the invention of air conditioning. Only when a hurricane hit Connecticut did it become clear that these were storms worth naming. The Weather Service took the idea from George Stewart, who wrote a best-selling novel in which meteorologists name hurricanes after girls. Which is a pity, in a way. Not that they don't name them after boys, too—they do, nowadays. But the Hurricane of '38 is also known as the Great New England Hurricane, and even if a hurricane should come next year that moves twice as fast and blows twice as hard, it will still be called Allison or Jessica. We can never honor another storm by simply calling it Great.



We walked through town on the night in 1985 when a lesser hurricane named Gloria had cut the power and closed the roads, marveling at the brightness of stars we'd never been able to see before, and at large pine trees snapped off thirty or forty feet in the air. One of these hefty, wind-blown missiles crashed through a neighbor's family room ceiling, others merely took down power lines and blocked streets. It took hours to reopen the main roads,weeks to restore power.

We lost half of a red maple to Hurricane Gloria. It split where it branched, about twelve feet up, half the crown shearing off and wrecking a split-rail fence. Like white pines, red maples are liable to lose branches in a high wind. The two have little else in common.

Pinus strobus is a dignified tree, dressed in durable forest-green needles meticulously produced in regular bunches of five. Pine trees extract two growing-seasons worth of service from each narrow leaf, a practice that stands in thrifty contrast to the prodigal habits of the red maple—extravagantly throwing away perfectly good leaves scarce six months old. The spendthrift maple exuberantly greets spring by coloring its twigs a highly indecorous shade of scarlet and welcomes autumn with even less restraint, painting entire counties red before going to bed for the winter. If not destroyed by a hurricane, a red maple will live eighty vivid years; a white pine, four sober centuries. There is a moral here.

As hurricanes go, Gloria wasn't much. Just as my generation's war looks puny measured against World War II, and our little recessions are nothing compared with the Great Depression. Hurricane Gloria, upending enough trees to knock out electric power for a couple of weeks in Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts, was nothing, nothing at all compared to my mother's hurricane: 1938. Now *that* was a storm

For starters, no one knew it was coming. The weather bureau was on the job, right enough, but with the limited, coastal-station monitoring equipment of that era, forecasters watched the hurricane veer off Hatteras heading seaward at about seventeen miles an hour, with no way of knowing that it would turn and rush toward New England at a speed of 78 m.p.h.. That's not the speed of the winds—those were clocked at 120 m.p.h. before they knocked down the weather tower on Fisher's Island, and were still a powerful 63 m.p.h. when the storm blew itself out over Vermont. 78 m.p.h. is the speed at which the storm itself sped toward an unsuspecting coast.

Forewarned is not necessarily forearmed. Emergency planning officials note that forecasting a major storm is as likely to lure thrillseekers to the coast as it is to result in timely evacuation of threatened neighborhoods. If a way were found to prevent hurricanes by some action as simple and cost-effective as installing storm-shutters, it is to be doubted that many of us would take the trouble to comply.

The Great New England Hurricane killed 700 people, blew the cog railway off Mount Washington, enabled people to row through downtown Hartford, and

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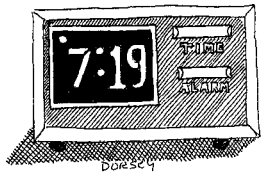
sent Katharine Hepburn wading to safety through a rising flood of salt water while her parents' Old Saybrook summer house washed out to sea. Roofs blew off houses in Montreal, fishing boats sank in Lake Champlain, and office workers drowned at their desks in downtown Providence—on the second floor. Sizable chunks of the coast were swept completely away: houses, foundations, land—everything, leaving ocean where neighborhoods had been. And it blew the pine trees down.

AMAZED THOUGH THEY WERE by banks of ripe strawberries, shoals of salmon and the sheer number of deer in the greenwood, nothing impressed Elizabethan explorers on this coast more than the white pine. Taller than a twenty-story building and many feet in girth, the trees dwarfed anything known in England, but they were more than a natural wonder: pine was a vital, strategic resource.

Brittania ruled the waves because she had the finest navy in the world, a navy built of oak hulls and pine masts. Yet by the reign of the Virgin Queen, England's forests were so depleted that London was reduced to digging coal out of the ground to keep warm, building houses of half timber stuffed with plaster, and fighting wars to protect the vital supply of lumber, masts, and iron from Sweden and Russia. Of course, seventeenth-century England lacked the sophisticated strategic planning that enables modern governments to avoid going to war over such vital resources as oil.

British strategic planning in the 1600s was rudimentary: stockpile enough masts, oak timber, and iron bars to protect sea lanes to the Baltic. In 1654 England found herself at war with Holland and Denmark; worse, those two nations succeeded in closing the narrow arm of salt water connecting the Baltic with the North Sea; worse yet, there were no masts in the Navy yard and you would be reading this magazine in Dutch if a shipment of white pine had not at that moment arrived from New England, sent by savvy colonials calculating to ingratiate themselves with the home government.

A Royal Navy ship of the line required a mast that was forty inches through at the base, one hundred and twenty feet tall, and absolutely straight. In the entire continent of Europe there grew not a single tree that could produce such a mast; so, skilled naval carpenters spliced masts together from lengths of Baltic fir, and British admirals sighed for the strength of masts cut from a single great tree. In a world that had not discovered the towering California redwood or Chilean alerce, the white pine was the only tree big enough and straight enough to make masts for the Navy.



For two centuries the mast fleets sailed regularly from New England ports, slow-handling, unwieldy freighters built to carry a cargo that would swamp an ordinary ship. Escorted by frigates in time of war, unnoticed in peacetime except by the more marginal farmers of New Hampshire and Maine who cut and ox-teamed white pine to the coast for sale to the King's mast agents, the mast fleets made their passage, carrying a vital strategic resource to England.

Until April of 1775 when Captain Mowatt, in command of His Majesty's mast ship *Minerva* at Falmouth, (now Portland) Maine, was briefly imprisoned by the local Committee of Safety while other patriots towed the annual supply of masts to a secure backwater.

Mowatt later returned and burned Portland to the ground, but the colonists had the last laugh. On the day Washington defeated Cornwallis at Yorktown, His Majesty's fleet was three hundred miles away in New York Harbor, having its masts repaired.

Timing is everything. If Cornwallis had had a fleet at Yorktown, Benedict Arnold would be the revered, patriotic hero of a member nation of the British Commonwealth. If the 1938 hurricane had hit earlier in September, when people were still at their beach houses, it would have killed thousands. If Hurricane Gloria had hit six hours later, at high tide instead of low, the storm surge would have swept a wide swath of cottage-cluttered Rhode Island beach as free of buildings as it was when the Narragansett Indians fished and clammed there.

THE BRITISH WERE NOT ALONE in their appreciation of the maritime possibilities of a tree that grows two hundred fifty feet high and five feet through; native Americans were putting to sea in white pine canoes when Britons were running through the woods smeared with blue paint. To call these craft *canoes* is a bit misleading since we are discussing not a birch-bark shell light enough for a strong man to lift above his head and carry around a waterfall, but boats which, although hollowed from the trunk of a single tree, were large enough to sail far offshore with thirty or forty fishermen hunting swordfish and even whales. The way to hunt a swordfish is to sail out to the warm, shark-filled currents of late summer at the edge of the continental shelf, and spear one while it basks in sunlight just below the surface. Spearing a three hundred pound fighting fish in shark-infested water is no sort of job for a birch-bark cockleshell.

If the Indians favored white pine for its solidity and the British for its immense size, Americans liked its light weight and straight grain. Imagine lifting a roof tree hewn of hickory into position and you will gain an appreciation of the virtues of pine; light, strong, smooth, straight, easy to work. And there was so much of it. Sensible folk burnt hickory in the fireplace, made their fences from chestnut, and built everything they could with white pine: great wooden bridges spanning the rivers, bobsleds to whisk through northern winters, and Thoreau's cabin at

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Walden Pond were made from white pine.

When all the pine in New England had been cut, the timber industry moved on to the pine forests of New York, Michigan and Minnesota. No one missed the pines except the red crossbill, disappointed to find no cone-bearing trees producing its favorite food, and an occasional bald eagle. Eagles nest at the top of white pines, liking an aerie fifty feet or more above the tops of other trees. But by the time the pines had gone there were few eagles left in New England. Only farms, stretching from the mountains of New Hampshire to the beaches of Long Island Sound. Then the railroads began to bring corn and beef from midwestern states where for a fraction of the price of a Yankee farm a man could buy acres of deep, fertile soil that produced double the yield of worn-out Yankee fields, and New England farmers began to abandon the land.

Plowing stopped first. Hayfields that would once have been planted to timothy or clover were allowed to grow what nature chose, with a few cows turned in to glean what they might. The cows ate the tender leaves of birch and aspen as they sprouted in the half-abandoned pastures; they did not fancy the taste of pine needles. Year by year the aging pasture grew more brambles and less clover until it was no longer worth the trouble of opening the barway to let cows in. At that moment, the old field ceased to be a pasture and began to be a forest; a very young forest where pine rejected by finicky cows had a head start on other trees.

On these worthless, abandoned fields, great pine forests grew, so many pines that the first scholars to study the New England woods, Victorian botanists pursuing a very Victorian passion for mapping the nation's forests in carefully delineated vegetation regions, labeled a broad swath of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, as well as the southern parts of New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine, as the White Pine Zone. In their zeal to fit everything into neat categories, Victorians missed a great many of the more interesting facts in life. They missed, for example, the fact that this region is not naturally so inclined to pine as it then appeared. Pine trees cannot grow in the forest understory; they grow where storms or fires have cleared the forest. This makes pure stands of white pine relatively rare in nature. A name more descriptive of the region's naturally occurring forest cover would have been Oak/ Chestnut Zone, a label used by the generation that lived after the Victorians but before the American Chestnut died, killed by blight. Second-growth pine spawned a lumber boom that saw three billion board feet sawn out of New England forests in 1909. Folks who had forgotten that Massachusetts hillsides could produce saleable commodities, who had almost forgotten that they owned a Massachusetts hillside, suddenly took notice. One of the first things they noticed was that the value of timber increases the longer you wait.

Pine trees four inches in diameter, which is about how big trees will be twenty to forty years after the land is abandoned—depending on how good the land was to begin with—are pretty much worthless. A stand of trees eight or ten inches through may be worth something to a sawmill, or to a pulpmill if there happens to be one nearby. A stand of twenty-inch diameter white pines, on the other hand, is a very valuable item—but it takes a century to produce.

BY 1938 THERE WERE hundreds of acres of ten- and fifteen- and twenty-inch diameter white pines in New England, pines that had started to grow when the farmer's sons went west, or failed to come home from the Civil War, or moved to the city. Pine forests painstakingly culled of lesser trees and limbed to produce knot-free boards. Pine whose owners had turned deaf ears to the offers of pulp-mill operators in a patient effort to produce high-

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value saw timber. They fell in a single afternoon

In some forests, not a single tree was left standing when the Great Hurricane had passed, leaving a tangled mess of broken limbs and splintered trunks. Landowners salvaged what they could, selling lumber in a depression economy and tipping thousands of sawlogs into ponds to preserve the wood against a time when the market might be better. Then Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and logs floated toward the sawmill in one of the great seller's markets of history.

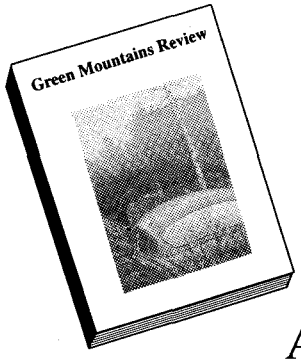
Sixty years later it is still sometimes possible for a hiker to identify a swath of forest felled by the Great Hurricane. In such a spot, the forest floor will undulate in the pillow-and-cradle pattern that remains after the root ball of a blowdown rots away. The trees will be an even-aged stand of black birch, interspersed with older, misshapen oak; trunks that grow straight for ten feet before losing any sign of a leader and branching madly in every direction. These were decapitated in 1938. But here and there a patch of white pines survives, and among these are a few trees growing on fields abandoned when the Republic was young. They are not as big as the trees the Indians hollowed out to hunt whales in; not as big as the trees the British Navy cut to mast its ships-of-the-line; not yet. But some of them are three feet through and a hundred and fifty feet high. They get bigger every year. Just by waiting, just by taking the time to walk into the woods and look, our grandchildren will one day see giant pines, pines larger than anyone now living can remember.

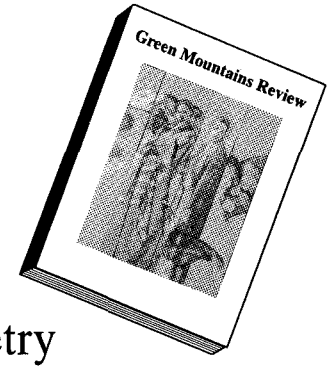
UNLESS, OF COURSE, LIFE continues in its familiar paths.

If it does, if we continue to heat our houses with fossil fuel, drive cars that spew carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and read magazines printed on paper made from wood, our grandchildren will live in a world without pine trees. The

Green Mountains Review

10th Anniversary Double Issue





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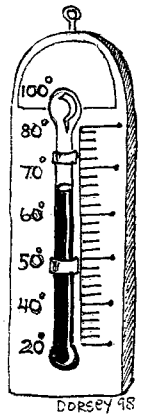
problem, of course, is that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere traps heat, and we pump carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at rates high enough to raise the temperature of the earth three or four degrees within the lifetime of children now in kindergarten. Three degrees isn't much; just enough to change everything.

Sugar maples, white pine and birch trees will die. Aggressive forest management might succeed in distributing some warm-climate species fast enough to keep up with a rapidly warming climate, but white pine is a cool-weather species. If we continue to generate carbon dioxide at the present rate, enough to warm the atmosphere by just three degrees, there will be no white pines in the White Pine Zone, no sugar maples in Vermont, no trout in the Adirondacks. Maine will be too warm for hemlock, much too far south for moose and our grandchildren will never see a hillside of sugar maples blazing in autumn glory. They may, however, live to see hurricanes of a size my mother's generation could not even imagine.



The worst-case scenario—we are a species fond of worst-case scenarios—is a hurricane that moves the way the Great Hurricane of 1938 moved: north, without making landfall on Hatteras. A really big hurricane requires the cooperation of dual high-pressure systems, a Bermuda high parked over the Atlantic, and a continental high over the midwest. Under these conditions, a hurricane can race toward Long Island through a low pressure trough, drawing strength from heat transferred to the atmosphere by evaporating ocean water. The warmer the ocean, the bigger the storm

An increase of three degrees in the temperature of a low pressure trough where a major hurricane is feeding on the ocean's heat might raise the wind speeds of our next hurricane from the 131 to 155 m.p.h. which such storms are currently capable of generating, to the 190 to 230 m.p.h. range. The margin represents the difference between destruction and obliteration.

Persons considering the purchase of ocean-front property may wish to peruse a map outlining the extensive neighborhoods known to have been under water in September 1938. More homes than you might expect stand on such land since the hurricane made a large number of sites available for development.

Which city is obliterated is a matter of chance and timing. A storm making a direct hit on the New York bight would make life interesting for residents in neighborhoods as far from the beach as Canarsie, Brooklyn, where 24-foot seas would completely submerge neat rows of two-story brick homes. Residents of beach-front communities on the Jersey shore do not need to worry about property damage. A mere, Gloria-size, category-3 hurricane making a direct hit on New Jersey would do more than damage property; a large segment of that low, sandy coast would simply vanish.

A reprise of the Great New England Hurricane, crossing Long Island and hitting the coast east of New Haven before racing toward Montreal, would reshape the map of Long Island, open new inlets, eliminate neighborhoods, and temporarily submerge Montauk, Southamp-ton, Quogue, and Moriches. Cabin cruisers would block major highways in Connecticut, parked aircraft would be lifted from the tarmac at Logan airport and set down in Chelsea, railroad tracks would wash away. Large areas of New England would have no usable roads, no telephones, no electricity, no drinking water. All of this happened in 1938. But nobody plans on hurricanes. Even at Bluff Point, Groton, where the Great Hurricane swept many acres out to sea and "caused a rapid return to the undeveloped state," the surviving land is a popular state park with spacious parking lots for the convenience of fishermen and hikers. It is the carbon dioxide spewed into the air by those fishermen's cars, by bird watchers' cars, by your car, by my car, that will make storm watching really interesting over the next few decades.

ATMOSPHERIC WARMING brought on by all that burning petroleum may cause the rise in sea level to speed up from the 1/10 inch per year or so we've seen for the last several hundred years—although even a tenth of an inch a year is a lot in cities like Venice, where sea level is rising but the buildings are not. It is quite a lot in places like Long Island, New Haven and Atlantic City, which are fewer inches above sea level with every lapping wave. Higher sea levels make built-up coasts increasingly vulnerable to storm damage. Sea level rises when the atmosphere warms, warm air warms the oceans, and warm oceans fuel tropical storms—all of which opens an unique opportunity.

Storm watchers awed by the power of nature unleashed are, for the first time in history, able to do more than watch. Just by turning on the evening news and following the weather report, storm fanciers are actually able to increase the prospect of seeing a hurricane peel the skin off Manhattan skyscrapers and suck out the contents. It is as if Mariners fans could, by cheering really loud, increase the speed of Randy Johnson's fast ball to 120 m.p.h.. Carbon dioxide produced by the fuel that powers the television set does its bit to alter the atmosphere and warm the planet. True, each television draws only a tiny amount of current. But when we're talking about changes this large, every little bit helps. □

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KRISTINE A. SOMERVILLE

False Pregnancy

My dog carries a six-pack of swollen nipples for the puppies she thinks grow inside her. When she raises her hind leg and licks her stomach, drops of milk appear and disappear as if she nurses herself. She eats for two, gobbling the food in her bowl and then looking up at me, her huge nut-brown eyes, keen, vulnerable, pleading. She has cravings too. Odd foods: mushrooms, olives, grapes, tomatoes. This morning, she tugged the quilt from the couch, and drug it to a corner where she slumped down, shut her eyes, tucked her nose into the joint of her leg, and now waits quietly for the moment when her stomach tremors and quakes, delivering the litter in warm gushes of blood and water. I have no idea how this pregnancy started, or, worse, how it will end. When I was a child my mother woke me to watch our cat give birth, a birth I remember as a dream, fragmented impressions, a gradation of colors: magenta, maroon, purple, blue. I named the kittens after Greek gods and no matter where in the house we hid, the mother found us. She carried them, one by one, by the skin of their necks, back to the dresser drawer. My husband brings home an article about pets on Prozac, and another on English majors who are well-paid for naming products perfectly. "Prozac," he repeats as if saying the word elevates his mood. He lifts our dog into his lap like a lanky child and rocks her in his arms. "We'll get you feeling happy, little mother." She wags her tail; her ears stand up straight. She thinks he offers a walk, maybe an exotic treat.

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Stan was going to become the youngest stuntman ever. Not as an act of rebellion or accommodation because his father was in the Business and his mother had once acted, not because he craved speed or heights or danger.

"It's a great movie hook, very high concept," his friend Bradley said. "I can sell it."

They were ten. They lived a few blocks from each other, had been born a few days apart. Stan's father produced (hoped to produce again, had his name attached to eight projects that hadn't gotten made "Yet, but we're very close"), Bradley's father was an accountant for Larry Storch and the estate of Zero Mostel.

"Let's start with a gag. A big gag," said Stan.

"I'll get it on tape. Like a calling card."

"Something to build on."

"Yes," said Bradley. "The filmmaker speaks."

Stan was going to become the youngest stuntman ever, not because his father spent less and less time with him and tried to make up by buying "things" (then stood around with the other parents after karate class implying how much he had paid), nor because his father canceled out on their last four scheduled "special times." Not because his mother had found a new career, cooked almost not at all, rushed Stan from piano lessons to tutoring in a station wagon with the magnetic signs of her real estate office on its doors. Not because his parents promised him a birthday party but the details seemed to grow more vague with each passing day. It was an argument over a satellite dish.

"It'll raise the value of the property," Stan's father said. Stan's nuclear family sat in different locations in the combination kitchen/family room/breakfast nook, a room created by the removal of three outside walls and the creation of a new space over what had once been yard, another project in the interests of raising property values. Stan stood by the ovens, his father at the round table along the far wall with the bay windows and his mother leaned against the sink.

"Don't tell me that doesn't matter to you," his father said "I understand what matters to people. It's my business to understand what matters."

"They look horrible." She ran the water. She stopped the water.

"I need this for my work, my career, our lives together."

Can't you wait for those DB whatever?" his mother said. "The little ones?" She ran the water again. She turned on the disposal.

"What do you think, Stan?" his father asked over the rushing water and the grinding. His parents, children of the '60s, believed everyone should be involved in family decisions.

"He watches way too much television as it is," his mother said, punctuating her words with the silence of the machines.

"He has to know about the Business if he's going into the Business."

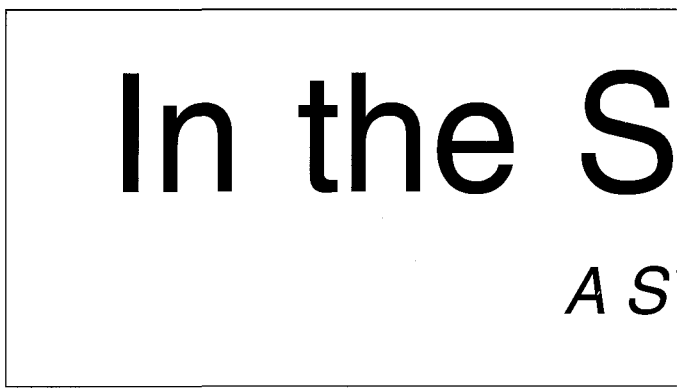
"He's not going into the Business. He's going to do something sane. Something that matters."

"So what I do doesn't matter?"

"What have you done?"

And so it went, the argument one of many arguments in which Stan's opinion was solicited but not heard, in which his presence as audience was encouraged but his role relegated to silent auditor. Without Stan's answer and without further consultation though with several more arguments between his parents over the next several weeks in which he stood by (looking for an opening to discuss the birthday party, realizing the timing was wrong, the timing might always be wrong) while water and electricity were wasted, fresh paper products hurled into the trash, food left uneaten, newspapers unread, mail not opened—arguments about money (his father couldn't find a development deal anywhere and they were forced to cash in the IRAs [at penalty] in order to maintain their lifestyle. "Thank God, Stan doesn't go to private school," his mother said. "He'd have to drop out." "He may have to stop all those lessons anyway," his father said. "He needs them," his mother said. "Stan, what do you think?"), arguments about property values (Stan's real estate selling mother had numbers always on her mind), aesthetics (his mother favored classical Italian, his father—in an effort to stay in touch with "the youth" [something he perceived as a kind of beast, a herd grazing just over the next rise] wore his hair long and badly cut, sported over-sized jeans and Doc Martens—favored MTV), work ethic, necessity for work—and money—the satellite went in. A three-meter gray, wire mesh-backed dish from Pencost Systems, with a Krugel tuning fork array.

"Details matter, Stan," his father said, pointing out the gold coaxial wiring ("Gold is better than silver [and 14 times more expensive]. Remember that."), the Stromson servo-control motor system ("Best on the market [if one were to believe the salesman who might be



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getting a kickback from the manufacturer for pushing their brand]. Best is better."), the Lymeton solar panel power backup ("Just in case, Stan [just in case the power fails and the family might be without a vital communications link with the outside world for more than a nanosecond]. It pays to be prepared.").

Afternoons after school, Stan had access to 147 different stations in eight different languages. His father didn't block the adult channels though Stan was not much interested in the pneumatic blondes bouncing up and down moaning, Oh, God, oh, baby. (Didn't those breasts hurt? The weight. They must have strong backs and how did they sleep?) From sex education class he understood how the human species procreated, what parts fit. He was aware of the many uses of the penis. He had one. What absorbed him was Buck Simms.

Buck Simms was one of the first wave of Hollywood stuntmen. Buck Simms sometimes doubled for Tom Mix in many of his westerns. The popular press believed Mix did his own stunts but it wasn't completely true, so Stan discovered watching a special on the American Western Classics movie channel. (Another myth exploded.) Buck Simms also doubled for Stuart Granger, John Wayne, and Tyrone Power. Too tall to stand-in for Alan Ladd and Audie Murphy wouldn't have him, there was plenty of other work. And who could forget his wonderful terrifying performance in "Fort Apache" where he played Indians in the night scenes, soldiers by day, or *The Perils of Nyiko*, one of the most wild serials ever made where Buck doubled for nearly everyone in the cast, the heroine included.

Buck joined a long line of stuntmen that went back to the days of Sennet's Keystone Cops. Harris Gordon, John Lehnberg, Eagle Eye, John Epper, Richard Talmadge, Dave Sharpe, Joe Bonomo, Charles Hutchinson, Eddie Polo. Yakima Canutt may have won the Academy Award™ but Buck originated many of the stunts Canutt later made famous. Buck was a natural horseman and his horse work surpassed the best stunt men because of his agility and his affinity for the animals. He did things cowboys couldn't do: a jump from a balcony to a horse, leaps between galloping stallions. He could work 10 stories in the air because height didn't affect him. He was an athlete and a tumbler, and had the terrific timing and coordination not found in cowboys.

The contemporary stuntmen had nothing on Buck, Dar Robinson in particular. What did a bunch of high-tech parachute stunts add up to? The movies were forgettable, the stunts added little. Besides, Dar died in the desert, impaled on a cactus, without medical help. It was tragic. It was stupid. He fell off a motorcycle on a practice run. The crew stood around for two hours and watched him die, the life leaching out of him. Not Buck though. Buck just disappeared. It was rumored he was seen going into a fire during his last stunt on a remake of "Remember the Alamo." The gag produced fine footage, a nomination from the Association, but that was the last of him. Who really knew?

To see Buck Simms leap onto a horse at full gallop, turn around in the saddle and fire both six-shooters, turn back and ride off into the chaparral, to see him jump from a speeding train, hurl himself through windows, leap from the top of a water tower, fall, as if dead, from the steeply pitched roof of a general store, take on ten men in a barroom brawl, drag behind a runaway horse, his leg "caught" in the stirrup, crash to the ground as his horse took a violent but controlled fall from a Running-W, drive a wagon off a high cliff, leap from the top of a dam as it exploded, wade in to herd off a stampede of maddened steers, rope and bull-dog with barely a scratch—now that's entertainment.

Not trying to sell homes in the Valley nor sitting in an office near (but not on) a studio lot taking endless, futile meetings. Buck Simms, stuntman, was a man of the outdoors, a man of action and bravery, a man who took calculated risks and made them look easy. He was a model for the future—Stan's future.

On the Saturday after Stan saw the show on Buck Simms and made his important decision, he was finally able to break free of his heavy schedule of piano lessons, karate lessons, plus rotational tutoring in all his

.ce Between Stairs

' BY IAN RANDALL WILSON

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subjects. He did not need remedial work, but his parents insisted on the tutoring in order to give him the same advantages private school students had. (Yet they paid as much for the extra lessons and tutoring as they would have spent to send him to private school.)

And they constantly argued about money.

He knew that his going to public school had something to do with those marches his parents had been in when they were in college but the connection was never fully explained to him any more than the word "egalitarian." (One did not have to be a genius to understand there was little equality in the world.)

On that Saturday Stan was finally able to get to the library. Though he was slotted for piano practicing, he convinced his mother that a book report due on Monday required immediate library research.

"You'll have to stay up later to finish your practicing," his mother said. "I won't be here to monitor you, I'm leaving for my open house."

"I'll do it," Stan said. His library card was in his pocket. He had memorized the correct spelling of Buck Simms's name.

"And why did you wait so long? When was this assigned?" His mother was weighted down with a briefcase and a collection of information kits on the house for sale. "You know you have to tell me these things. I'm not a mind reader, unlike what your father thinks. Scheduling matters."

"I forgot," Stan said. "I'll practice when I get home."

"And don't let your father try to get you to watch another show with him. That god damn dish. Until you practice. Then you need to run through your *kata* and I'm sure you have homework from tutoring. Don't you have homework from tutoring?"

Stan rode his bike to one of the last remaining open local branches of the Los Angeles public library system. Though the shelves were in disarray and the branch woefully understaffed, a couple of hours of systematic searching turned up not one but two books about stuntmen. The first was a history, the second purported to be a training manual of sorts for beginners.

Stunt work is an illusion, the history book said. From the most simple punch to an elaborately choreographed stampede, from an easy walk down the top of a speeding train to a full-scale assault on the Alamo, the stuntman simulates death in a thousand ways. With each new stunt, the stuntman looks in the heart of darkness where being and nothingness collide.

"Wow," said Stan. He hadn't realized that stunt work might be a calling.

"I didn't know that either," said Bradley. "It is a calling."

An effective punch grazes but does not connect, uses the lens' depth of field in the simulation; it's the sound effects that carry over. A stampede employs mechanical cows, close-ups of hide-covered wooden heads, multiple exposures from slightly altered angles, and again, sound is critical to complete the show. A speeding train is created by undercranking the camera. The simulated assault on the Alamo takes days to produce two minutes of finished film.

The book on training was perhaps more practical. He had to be in shape, the book said. He had to have strength and endurance but he needed to be limber and flexible, too. Stunt work demanded many different and difficult qualities in a person. Balance mattered. Timing. Depth perception. Physio-kinetic awareness. Stan had to look up the last one and was unable to discover its meaning until one of the gym teachers, during a lesson on the parallel bars, mentioned that the best gymnasts had physio-kinetic awareness.

"Stuntmen, too," Stan said.

"We read that," said Bradley.

The class tittered. "If you say so, men," the gym teacher said. "Now, who's first?"

Bradley stood by with a notepad jotting down ideas as Stan began his training in the afternoons after school while his mother was off in the Valley selling homes. He'd been to one of her open houses. She stood for hours in the living room of the house waiting for the buyers. The houses she showed were always somewhat dilapidated. Over-priced. The yards untended. Like their house.

Five years before such houses would have been snapped up as fixer-uppers. "Starters," her mother called them. The market went bad as Stan's mother went into real estate. The boom over, everyone struggled to move properties. The houses Stan's mother sold had trouble staying in escrow.

"It's the broker's curse," she said.

She stood in the living room of houses waiting for buyers and she never sat down.

"Because it makes a bad impression," she told Stan.

"What about me?" Stan said. "Do brokers usually bring along their children? Will I make a bad impression?"

His mother squeezed him on the shoulder and said, "If anyone asks, you're a broker in training."

(His mother was perhaps more optimistic than practical. But she worked hard.)

"You just look young for your age."

(Not only the youngest stuntman but the youngest broker as well.)

One of two potential buyers straggled in. Stan's mother went through her pitch describing the amenities, the square-footage, the quality of the nearby schools. Congenially, she led the buyers around the first floor, the upstairs and back to the living room.

After showing the house to a neighbor from next door and a dispirited couple who said not one word dur-

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ing the entire tour, Stan's mother told him: "You have to contend with lookee-loos. The broker's curse."

"I thought that was escrow," Stan said.

"There are many curses in the real estate business," his mother said.

There was one bright spot in the afternoon of that open house. "I'd take it," a man bald in the center with pig tail in the back said after completing a turn around the downstairs. He had a big belly which he thrust forward. "But you'll have to cut your commission in half. Tell the seller I'll give him 125 and not to bother countering. That's my offer."

Stan watched from the corner. His mother kept smiling through this, the same smile she used when his father called to say he was working late (again), had to take clients out for dinner (but his mother wasn't invited), would spend the night at the club, had to go out of town (on extremely short notice), was entertaining possible financiers (at an unnamed hotel), had to interview a Finnish model who might be perfect for the part of Britomart in his proposed remake of Spencer's *Faerie Queene* ("The beauty of Britomart was her hidden identity" [yes, that, and the perfect metaphor for things he shouldn't know]).

The balding man turned out to be using the tactics of Wayne Johnson's Buy Real Estate For Nothing course, one of the many late-night infomercials running on cable. "And screw the broker," Stan's mother said.

(There were many curses in the real estate business.)

His father had similar difficulties trying to resurrect the most important work of his life: The Britomart project in turnaround, again, for the third time.

"It's the damn economy," his father said (perhaps unwilling to admit that a costume drama where the main character is a personification allegory for Chastity might be less than attractive to a studio executive who—if they remembered the story at all—did so as one of the texts they had to slog through in a Freshman survey course not too many years before).

His father tended to blame everything on the economy. If the morning paper didn't arrive or the mail was late, it was the economy. If the signal on the satellite dish wavered, it was the economy. When the neighborhood experienced a series of short blackouts each morning for three weeks running, it was the economy.

"And the studio system," his father said. "When a new regime sweeps in they sweep everything old out. They don't want to be tarred by the old brushes. They want to put their stamp on things."

Stuntmen didn't worry about projects in turnaround or houses in the Valley (or the economy). Stuntmen worried about wind velocity and air pressure in the jump bag. Though leaping off the roof onto old mattresses didn't require such precise calculations, this, too, was how Buck Simms might have started.

Stan had traversed the neighborhood on trash day and recovered a pile of mattresses. He hooked up an old red wagon to his bicycle, rolled up the mattress with some effort, and tied it to the wagon. Then he dragged the whole contrivance home. Pedaling was hard work with two hills to surmount before his house, and the wagon constantly threatened to tip him over and throw him onto the pavement.

Sometimes Bradley was there to help him drag each mattress off the wagon and, with a series of kicks and pulls and pushes, maneuver them by the side of the garage—out of sight of his parents. (As if they cared.) He tore up his hands the first time, tried to hide the damage, but didn't need to (they weren't watching him). Except for cursorily making sure he got to his lessons and to school, his parents seemed too busy with themselves. His father might ask Stan how his day was but before receiving an answer launch into another complaint about the economy and then about a development executive who kept him waiting over an hour only to cancel the meeting while Stan's father languished in the reception area. (The nerve.) His mother was being pressured by the woman who ran the brokerage to improve performance or "changes may have to be made." They saw each other running in or running out, a piece of toast in the mouth, a briefcase in the hand, gnawing on half a sandwich, books under the arm, a carcup of coffee steaming through its tiny vent. Stan found he was out of socks and underwear and, after wearing the same pair for a week, began doing his own laundry. His father did take him aside and tell him that karate had to be suspended for awhile.

(What was the appropriate response to this pronouncement? Extremes of anger or concern or sorrow might make his father suspicious. A lack of emotion might produce the same result.) Stan let his lower lip quiver for a second then stopped it as his father stepped closer. Stan said, "That's all right, Dad."

(Now he would have more time to train as a stuntman.)

"Don't be upset. I promise it's only for awhile. A little while."

"Okay."

"You really liked karate."

"It's only for awhile. That's what you said."

"I promise you you'll get back to it. And we haven't forgotten your party. We need to work out the details. Maybe something small? A family party?"

Stan nodded, his father drifted off, Stan went outside to the garage where his father had a weight set, a heavybag, and an old stationary bike. The equipment had not been used since Stan's birth but, except for being dusty and all the iron parts covered with a scale of rust, things worked fine.

Using the exercises in the book, Stan lifted weights,

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repeating the same exercise over and over. There was no mention of a heavy bag and Stan was unsure if boxing skills were required. He rode the stationary bike but it squeaked. Even after the application of oil to all visible moving parts, the machine still let off a shrill noise whenever he pedaled fast. Stan decided that riding outside was a better idea and substituted laps around the block for mileage on the machine. He did leg exercises, arm exercises, back work, chest, shoulders and he concentrated, too, on his calves and forearms. Areas often neglected, the book said, but vital for the stuntman's ability to jump and climb, to leap and roll.

The movie station replayed the special which Stan carefully taped, and this time they made a special offer: For $29.95 they had available in limited quantities a book authored by Buck Simms (as told to H. Jaglom) on the art of the stuntman. The station would take checks if he sent in right away. Along with their philosophy of open discussion, his parents also allowed Stan to manage whatever limited money he saved. He had control over his own savings account. He pedaled to his bank, had a cashier's check made out for the amount, went to the post office and mailed away. The book arrived two weeks later.

Many of the same exercises were contained but there was a whole regimen for training much more extensive and detailed than in the book he got from the library. In the fourth week Stan took a practice jump. He exercised caution though, landing in a seated position—like Buck's book said—rolling back, slapping the mattresses with both palms, exhaling sharply. Shock Dissipation it was called.

He stood on the edge of the roof and worked on his balance. Control. The landing site seemed a long way away. In the moment before his first jump he remembered a time the year before when both his parents stayed home from concern over nearby brushfires. Santa Annas rushed off the desert pushing to the sea, giving the skies a rare clarity, a luminance in the drying. The sun was hesitant that morning. Smoke lay over the city in a bitter pall. They said the forests were burning. He was on the roof—then impact, a jarring that spread out throughout his body. No breaks. No sprains. (Amazing.)

"Amazing," said Bradley.

Stan rode his bike up and down hills to strengthen his legs and develop his wind. In his driveway, he tried holding the bike absolutely still and upright to test and improve his balance.

"You're getting better at that," Bradley said.

He was up to three seconds now. He had started at nothing. He helped the gardener lift the mowers off the back of the truck, carry fertilizer bags to the backyard, rake and bag leaves.

"What are you doing, young man?" his mother said.

"Practicing the doctrine of equal political, economic, and legal rights for all human beings," Stan said. "Like you did in college, right?"

His mother had no answer for this and Stan went on working. His parents' arguments escalated. The family had not sat down together for a meal in more than a month. The maid stopped showing up and there was no explanation for her sudden and continuing absence. The house went undusted. (And the party, there was no mention of the birthday party. Was he being selfish? Trouble in the family and he focused on his party?) Dishes frequently piled up in the sink which Stan found himself washing. Trash piled up as well which Stan took out if only to stop the bad smells that came from the barrel. The pool went untended, leaves covering its surface and Stan couldn't risk swimming. Finally the gardener stopped coming as well, the grass growing out in the front yard, yellowing then dying off in patches.

No explanations were offered. But the training went on. Stan tried a new landing surface: cardboard boxes lashed together with a tarpaulin over them. He read that in the book. When he hit, the air was forced from the boxes cushioning his fall but they were only good for one landing. Unable to maintain a constant supply of boxes, he had to go back to the mattresses which limited the heights he could try. Modern stuntmen used jump bags, rubberized canvas inflated with compressed air. Like landing on a giant pillow. Maybe camping air mattresses would do.

Stan's strength and endurance increased, visibly. Wearing only a pair of briefs, he stood in the full-length mirror in his bedroom and examined his body. Muscles had developed all over. There were also black and blue bruises on his upper legs and on his arms. Stunts took hard work. He banged his head on the garage wall after too tentative a jump. He scraped his leg on the gravel when he came off the mattresses. That jump was too enthusiastic in compensation for the tentative one before.

He watched the tape he had made of the Buck special. He read Buck's book. He brought the other two back to the library. They were not nearly as informative as Buck's.

In Buck's most famous stunt he leaped from the top of a water tower into a moving hay cart, one take in a master shot. Stan's father had long ago taught him terminology in case he might be interested in writing a script (though pursuing a career as a screenwriter was not recommended [because the writer is always getting screwed]), so at the least he'd be able to understand his father's scripts and give an opinion. The camera was set far enough away to view the tower from top to bottom all in the frame. In the documentary, they had slowed the shot down and Stan wasn't sure if that's how it

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appeared in the original film. Buck's body plummeted for what seemed like the longest time. He wore all black and stood out in good contrast against the white water tower and the light colored straw. It was funny, really, Buck landing nearly in a seated position in the hay cart, immediately swallowed up by the straw, loose bunches flying out on all sides strewing the road. The slow moving cart bounced a bit on impact then settled down, rolled out of frame.

Stan wanted to recreate that stunt but where in Los Angeles would he find a water tower and a hay cart? He knew from the history book that the gigantic airbags modern stuntmen used to cushion their fall limited the scope of the shot. No way could the camera be set blocks away to capture a fall in one take on a master. They got the fall part of the way down the building and then the aftermath. Sometimes not even the aftermath if it was too gory. Or they found a location where the fall would be covered by a slight rise in front of the camera. The stunt gave the illusion of a complete fall in one take without the finish, implying through sound effects that the body had landed. (Illusion all around—everything in life seemed to have its own metaphor for lying.)

Buck believed in safety but safety had to be balanced against the stunt and the needs of excitement for the picture. Tough, with apparently a high threshold for pain, Buck performed stunts no one would get near these days what with the potential for million-dollar lawsuits. Stan mentioned something in passing to his father who said, "Insurance is killing everyone. Looks like I'm going to have to have Britomart digitally walk through fire during the rescue in the last scene. That pushed the budget up another mil."

Buck Simms would have walked through fire, put on asbestos and a wool undersuit. Leapt through the inferno and kept on going right at the camera. Britomart was a woman masquerading as a knight. Because she hid beneath knight's armor, they could use a stuntman for the gags. Put the visor down and pass through fire. On the far side the actress returns, sweeps off her helmet and shakes out her long blond hair, black smoke and fire behind. Buck Simms would have got the stunt in one take. Beautiful. On time. On budget.

Stan knew he was not yet ready but he was determined to design his own stunt and get it in one take with Bradley's home video camera. A leap off a hotel or apartment balcony into a pool might be the way to go, no airbag required. It had been done before but the one-take master made all the difference. They always stopped before they hit the pool. Not Stan. He'd go all the way. (The way Buck Simms would have done the stunt.)

He needed experience going into water from a height. Jumping off the neighbor's one-meter board—a springy plank that bent down nearly to the water with only Stan's weight upon it—wasn't going to do it.

"You must know someone, Dad," Stan said.

"Why the sudden interest in diving?"

"I want to know."

Stan used guilt after his father canceled the fifth of their "special time" meetings. Reluctantly (it seemed), his father made a few calls and then took him down to the old diving center at Pomona College, his father's *alma mater*. "I hope this makes up for the cancellations but I want you to know I'm taking time off from work to do this with you," he said.

"Thank you," said Stan.

The building was old and dark and dank and smelled of chlorine and something else. Stan couldn't identify it but it was bad. In the locker room he donned a pair of nylon shorts that he used for swimming. None of those little Speedos for him. In the cool air goosebumps rose on his arms and legs. He wrapped a towel around his body and went out to the diving pool.

Practice had just finished for the team and a group of divers came toward him. They were tall and muscular, bodies without body fat. They laughed and passed him.

His father was talking to a man dressed in a warm-up suit.

"Coach Hendry," the man said. "Your father was one of my students. I bet you didn't know that. Flunked swimming three times. Almost kept him from graduating but we pulled him through. Your father tells me you want to learn how to dive."

"I want to jump off the high board and see how it feels."

"You don't want to learn to dive, Stan?" his father said. "I thought you wanted to learn how to dive. That's why I did this for you. So you could learn how to dive."

Stan shook his head. "I want to jump."

The adults looked at each other in confusion.

Stan said quickly, "It's for your movie."

"There's no water in my movie."

"In the ocean scene. But I can tell you about that later."

"You've been thinking about my movie?

(Was everyone this easy to manipulate? He, too, was caught up in the lying.)

"Coach," his father said, "sorry about the false pretenses but can he jump?"

The coach looked at his watch. "I made the time. Go straight in, Stan. Put your hands by your sides. Think about slicing the water. We use metaphors on the diving team. Think about cutting that water like the point of a knife."

Stan took three jumps on the low board. The board was stiffer than the neighbor's, propelling him up high-

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er, out farther over the water. Jumping off the roof still had proven far more difficult. Here, the water cushioned him.

"You sure you don't want to dive," his father said, his voice booming off the tiles.

"Jump. I'm jumping," Stan said, climbing from the pool to drip water on the floor. He went to the next higher board.

"He's jumping," his father said.

Stan tried the three-meter board. He walked to the end, took a small hop and flew into space. He remembered an afternoon at the beach a year before, maybe two, late when the wind fell off and five gulls landed beside them. The surge of each new wave carried the birds higher up the sand in search of drier ground. Stan and parents sat in a depression culled and drawn by the weight of their bodies facing out toward the sea. In that moment they were then a family as the sky bled carmine at its farthest edge. The impact with the water was sharper. He went in deeper, took longer to get back to the surface, needing three kicks.

"I want the higher board," Stan said. "The really high one."

His father looked (uneasily it seemed) at the coach. Stan came over, dripping water on the tile. (His father no doubt thought of danger, insurance, how much time this was all taking.) In the slight chill of the room Stan rolled his shoulders in and hunched his body for warmth.

"I can do it," Stan said. "I just have to keep my body straight and relaxed."

His father looked at the coach. The coach looked at his father. Both men looked at Stan.

"I can," he said.

Coach Hendry called over an assistant who had been sitting in the stands. "Get me an insurance waiver," he said.

The television commentators said the best divers saw the water the moment before impact. Even after spinning three times, twisting and piking they saw the water. At 32 feet per second per second time slowed down. Gravity loosed its boundaries, released them to complete their turn and spike the water knife-like without splash. The great divers saw the water. A second and a half. Worlds suspended.

Stan climbed. Wide steps covered in abrasive. His footing was sure, the pool visible in the space between stairs. The floor got farther and farther away. Perhaps he was making a mistake. A thinning spot had developed on the top of his father's head. (Perhaps this jumping was a mistake. He was not ready, had not sufficiently practiced.) The pattern of the tiled floor grew indistinct.

He reached the top of the tower and kept walking. The sides were blue, the surface of the platform rough. He kept walking to the end of the platform, did not look down, kept walking and then he was in space. He remembered that in autumn, the leaves don't change in Los Angeles. Except on one small patch of road whose name he could never remember.

"You were a real pro up there," his father said.

"I'd like to try this again sometime," Stan said.

"Just jumping?" the coached asked. "You really don't want to dive? Sure. Mitch, bring him around anytime. Maybe we'll get you up there too—to learn how to jump."

He had only to find a hotel for his stunt.

He rode to one on the boulevard and discovered that, if challenged by security or hotel personnel, all he had to do was say that his parents were guests in the hotel and they left him unbothered. "What room?" an overambitious assistant manager demanded the next time.

"Five-seventeen," Stan said. Every hotel had a 517. Stan had learned from his parents something to the effect that certainty perceived was certainty achieved. (Another illusion revealed itself.) The way he understood it was adults left children alone if the children seemed to have a purpose or a destination given to them by parents and other authority figures provided the children responded with assurance and no hesitation. "We're staying in room 517," Stan said.

"Okay," said the assistant manager. "Are you enjoying your stay?"

(He was having a fine "stay.") Stan went out by the pool.

He had to find a hotel with rooms that had patios and balconies overlooking the pool. He needed the courtyard to be small so that there wasn't much deck between the building and the pool. If he was going to jump he would only be able to get out a few feet from the railing and didn't want to miss the water. He also needed to be near the deep end. On his fifth try, he thought he found the place when he realized that the deep end faced out and away from the horse-shoe shaped building. He would manage the leap only to land in three feet of water. Nearly as bad as landing on the deck.

The search went on. His training went on. Hard to fit in all the work and at the same time find a hotel. He consulted the Yellow Pages, rode up and down the wide boulevards of the San Fernando Valley looking for the right place.

The Valley Meridian was it, the building constructed in a circle around the pool, each wall equidistant from the pool. He paced them off. Ten floors high on all sides. He prowled the hallways and figured out the perfect room. 1034. A pool-facing room and thus a bit more expensive than the ones that faced the street. 1034.

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Bradley was excited to hear what Stan described. "I could have helped you find the place," he said.

"You know you can't tell anyone."

"This is very exciting."

"You're only going to get one take," Stan said. "You'll have to figure out a camera angle and a move. Personally, I think you should get back as far as possible and keep a master shot but if you want to follow me down, that's okay."

They visited the hotel and Bradley took notes. Though he had in the past taped Stan leaping from the roof, he planned now, fervidly. They tried different angles, Bradley went up on the roof with Stan. Bradley stood across the yard in a long shot. Bradley placed his camera on the ground looking up as Stan leaped. Stan held the camera once and leaped with it. That jump hurt because he wasn't able to use the full shock dissipation technique without injuring the camera. Later, they edited the sequence together and watched with great excitement.

"It looks believable," Stan said.

Bradley was critical of the lighting, his own camera movement, the lack of steadiness to the frame, continuity. Then he said, "For the big one, we need to have more than one camera if you're only going to do one take into the pool."

"We can't," Stan said. "We're sneaking in."

Bradley said, "I know a whole bunch of kids who have cameras. It's like a club. They want to go into the movies."

"The hotel people don't say anything when it's just me, but ten or fifteen kids roaming around the hotel with cameras." (How would they explain that? They'd have to get more than one room, take up several positions.) "We'll never pull it off," Stan said. "Everyone has to get down there at the right time on the right day. We'd have to have a camera plot and full directions. This is turning into a production." Stan ticked off a half-dozen more obstacles including the impossibility of getting ten or fifteen kids together for any reason other than a party.

"What about your birthday party?" Bradley said. "When is your birthday, anyway?"

When Stan's piano lessons came to an abrupt end as did his tutoring lessons he saw an opportunity. The arguments between his parents stopped as well. They had taken to sleeping in separate bedrooms when his father slept at home, which seemed to be less and less. One afternoon Stan waited for his mother to drive him for piano and she didn't show. Later that night he asked her what had happened.

"I told you that we had to stop them."

They were in the kitchen eating dinner. Tofu ravioli. An acquired taste.

"You didn't say anything. I waited," Stan said.

"You're not listening. Your father and I told you."

There was a noise from the front door, keys and the door opening. Footsteps, the dropping of a heavy object onto the floor. A curse.

"Your father told you."

"Only about the karate."

His father walked in and got a beer from the refrigerator. He held it to his forehead. "How's everyone?" he said.

"I told Stan about his lessons," his mother said.

"Changes have to be made, Stan. Temporary changes we hope. How do you feel about that?"

(Certainty perceived—certainty achieved.) He said: "Like the maid and the pool cleaner and the gardener. How about someone else taking out the trash? None of my friends wash their own clothes."

Stan ran from the room. (Perhaps he had gone too far, said too much. His training was going so well and without interference from his parents. He had modified the landing surface using air mattresses taped together on top of the regular mattresses. So much easier to land.)

In a little while his father came up to his room. "I know this is hard, Stan."

"Are you getting a divorce? I see what's going on."

"Your mother and I have always said you were very observant, Stan. Very intelligent, too. You have insight. I know these changes aren't easy. We probably are getting divorced. We'll have to sell the house and move. I don't know where."

"Then I want something," Stan said, "since you've taken everything else away. You keep saying I'm going to have a party for my birthday. I've found a place. A pool party. At the Valley Meridian. I'll have a few friends. Rent a room so we can change. Can you still afford that? A cake and some drinks. We don't need a whole lunch. On the Saturday before my birthday. That's what I want. You don't even have to get me anything else. The party will be fine."

His father, after a short consultation with his mother with Stan not present nor invited to be present (the '60s not everything they apparently claimed to be), agreed.

No one was swimming and they all had videocameras. Stan's parents asked when they were going to go in.

"We're working on something," Stan said. "A birthday video."

His parents retreated to a pair of chaise lounges. They drank iced tea. They did not let their chairs touch.

Stan had rented the room, contacted the hotel and made arrangements. Without telling his father, he had actually rented two rooms (at a rate), used a borrowed (with permission) credit card. The rooms were at opposite sides of the circular building, both on the tenth

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SUSAN CONLEY

Hot For Strangers

Tiny black roses blazed on moldings,
and air compressed as in a schoolroom,
a teacher's bony back.

Then I lost the eye of a neighbor I knew
from across the aisle.
My mind on the bathroom but also on people

who know sex without love.
I was once stuck in a service elevator almost forty minutes
with a man who smelled of elephant garlic.

If God really chooses the people he saves
he would have skipped us. Panicking,
in nothing akin to a state of grace,

groping, trying
Japanese breathing techniques:
I exhaled and thought of tangibles.

Cereal boxes. Friends on the cover, cartoon blurbs
reading, try these flakes they'll turn you on.
My brother J. says we can't be pulled down

by longing for the past.
In the heat of that steel box
I craved only our cold world back.

Endless parking lots and envy.
Craved loneliness even. And Eddy's Soul Food Joint
next door where Chinese women fry link sausage and grits.

On the way to redeem cans,
men slip coins in the machine, gyrate slow to Motown,
pretend they're hot for strangers.

floor. Stan had sworn everyone to secrecy. "Because if you say anything about the other room it'll blow it. Blow the whole thing."

They huddled around tables with amazingly sophisticated maps of the hotel grounds. Though Stan was the stuntman, Bradley acted as the unit director, whispering to the other boys, pointing out camera emplacements.

"One take," Bradley said. "That's all we get. Make sure you have fresh batteries and tape. Keep those cameras away from the water. Synchronize watches."

Stan leaned against the balcony railing of the tenth-floor room selected for its strategic location to the pool. He leaned against the metal railing heated by the sun and looked out at the mountains in the distance, a layer of smog banding them. The cameras were in place, already rolling. His parents sat below. The pool shimmered.

He stepped over the railing and stood on the ledge outside, holding onto the metal behind him. The blue water of the pool shimmered below. The cameras rolled. Now his parents saw, got to their feet and pointed, shouted. (Impossible to hear from this distance.) Cars pulled up along the street. People walked by the hotel. A slight breeze blew.

He let go of the rail and his balance changed. In that interval poised on the ledge he remembered the one winter his parents took him back east. High up the esca, he stood beside a single pine, the world white around him, untracked except for the path of his footprints leading ever upward. The wind sang through the green limbs shaking out the powder like dust. He was younger then in his heavy boots, knowing little more than the anticipation of speed to come, the sharp decline. And then he leaped upon his sled, the blond wood slats receiving him, red runners slick and ready. He dropped down the hill, miles from home, flying, flying. □

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ADRIAN KORPEL

Naiads

When you first see those white marble nymphs in the garden of the Hearst castle, they look so real, you want to kiss them. You want to hang back, sneak away when the guide is not looking, and make your way to the circular, blue-tiled swimming pool where the tall Doric columns are reflected in the still water.

There, off to the side, stands a group of three naiads. They form a small circle in the shallow pool, holding hands, laughing and giggling, while they kick up water at each other and their bodies sway with pleasure. You could take off your clothes and swim under water to come up in the middle of their circle, like a young god. They'd giggle even more and combine forces against you. And then, when you're all tired and happy, you and they would climb out of the pool, and sit on the lawn near the willow tree.

At the far end of the pool is a small pavilion. Pan may be leaning against a tree there, playing his flute. In the luxuriant afternoon, the reedy music of his pipes drifting toward you across the water. The naiads would fall silent, listening to Pan, suddenly aware that you are a man. Maybe you'd kiss them then, softly, gingerly, your lips caressing their white skin.

The difficulty is, of course, getting around the guards. And the tourists, for that matter; they're everywhere. They'll give you away. They'll point and twitter, and their children will be mocking and booing you. No, you must do it at night. You must take the last shuttle up the hill to the castle and go on the tour. Then you stay behind in the movie theater, in one of the big overstuffed seats with large backs. Up front, where nobody sits. You'll be safe there, they won't look for you, they never do.

When everybody has left, when all the shuffling and chattering has died away, you make your way in the darkness to the front of the theater and go out through the small door under the exit sign. It leads to a tiled terrace, just above the swimming pool. The sun has set and a pale moon casts blue shadows around the statues. Orion floats high above you. The air is clear up here, and the white, diffuse ribbon of the Milky Way arcs across the sky. Everything is quiet.

A marble Aphrodite watches you languidly, from near the low balustrade where wide steps lead down to the pool. You approach her, kneel down, and whisper your supplication. She smiles, and you know it is all right. You go down the stone steps. The pool lies in the moonlight like a blue bowl. The naiads form a silent circle, waiting for you, their white marble soft as flesh. □

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THE LOWER WATERS

A Story by Kathryn Duhamel

My wife is a Jew. She wakes up carefully, before dawn, not speaking until she has said her morning prayer down in the dining room, down kneeling under the good china, the expensive walnut table. She prays there because she does not want to wake me, but nothing is louder than the sound of her silent awe. She rises from the bed as if she were ascending to heaven. Life. Again. Today. The three cats, already hungry, circle her, paw her, too, as she gives herself to awe and love. I know because I have seen her there, kneeling on the deep pile rug, ignoring them.

She often dreams that she is on fire. I turn to her in darkness, in our dark house which is dark even by day, in the rich burgundy and gold of our bedroom. I turn to her as she is rolling over and over, and hold her still. I hold her in her old flannel nightgown, and am never sure if I should. I am never sure late at night the flames won't engulf her as I hold her gently. I am never sure, actually, that I will not catch fire, that we will not burn together in this bed, ablaze with glory or insolence.

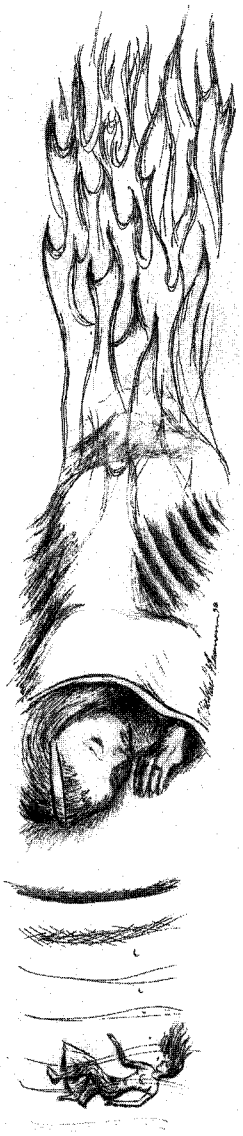
"Last night," she will say, "I dreamed that I was on fire."

I will feign surprise. "Again?" I will say, "Again?" I love my wife. I will pass her a plate of potatoes.

She will talk about the baby that died. "He would have been a good boy," she will say, "he is with God now." Our child, never born. She will say that it was her fault, all her fault, and start to cry, spilling a glass of water. The water will spread slowly across the table in a big dark stain.

My wife was a rabbi's daughter, but now she is only my wife, the wife of a wealthy protestant. She was promised at twelve to a rabbi's son, she was groomed to be the wife of a holy man. She has lived her life in the presence of holy men, solemn men wearing beards. My wife has learned to read their guarded looks, has been captivated by their piety. I know nothing of such men. For twenty years she has been my wife, and for twenty years she has been on fire. She comes home with the groceries, her face blazing. Fifteen years ago, she burst into flames in the brightness of a doctor's office as he told her she could not bear children. The burning has hollowed her out and left her frightened, ablaze, awestruck.

"What is holy?" This is the question my wife asks, and laughs. She answers herself. "I am holy. I am a vessel. I will not be filled." My wife wakes up to pray, rises, silent, puts on her robe, walks downstairs and kneels on the thick carpet, in a place worn down with her kneeling and rocking, and she prays this: that the earth and the waters come together again, that she may see God.



I have only seen her family's house from the outside, the tall brick building in which her mother, father, and sisters covered the mirrors and sat barefoot in the black mourning their loss. She was dead to them and, I feared, she was dead to herself as well. She was eighteen and pregnant when we were married. She did not smile, but resigned herself to me with a hopelessness I could not understand. I could not find a place for her sense of loss anywhere in my experi-

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ence. I did not yet know about the darkness of a house.

No messiah, she miscarried shortly after the marriage, and in a tumult of pain and wedding gifts, we sat in the thick silence of the house trying to love each other. "Sarah," I said quietly, standing over the bed, "can I get you anything?"

She would not look at me for a week, would not look at anyone. Her family did not come. One day she got out of bed, shut all the shades in the house and lit candles in every room, knelt in the dining room on the thick pile rug and prayed for five, six hours without stopping. Wailing. When she finally rose, shaken and weak, she stumbled to where I was, sitting on the couch in the next room, looked at me with her blazing eyes, and collapsed into my lap.

I was alienated by her piety but could not leave her.

Something inside her, I decided, was forever dead. I started carving again, for the first time since my father died. I chose large chunks of hard wood: oak and maple, and sat in the cold garage with them. Using the tools my father gave me when his knuckles swelled with arthritis, I littered the floor with clean shavings. I was still alive.

It was an unusually cold winter with hardly any snow. The smell of new wood got into my clothes and my hair. On my way from the house to the garage in the early morning, the ground was as hard and unyielding as concrete. I put a couple of hunks of wood in the old stove, held, in the dark, one of the pieces I was working on, and watched the sun rise through dusty panes of glass on the east side until it was light enough to see. Even before sunrise, the wood was warm in my hands, as if it held the heat from my palms within its soft lines.

The chunks of wood became masks, small icons, large, fluid figures, which slowly filled the cold room. Each finished piece was a surprise and a relief. I felt as if they were all parts of my body I never knew I had, and their faces watched me with constant, quiet approval. I saw less and less of Sarah, but felt that I understood her better. While I was able, so easily, to pick up a pen or a chisel, she was paralyzed, unable to move beyond the death in her belly and her spirit. Unable to recreate herself again and again.

The day she came into the garage for the first time, I woke up at five and slipped out of bed, then turned around and looked at her in the dim light. I realized I hadn't looked at her, really looked at her, in months. She looked peaceful. The lines in her face were relaxed, her forehead was high and smooth, her left hand rested above her head on the pillow. Rumpled blankets, evidence of another restless night which I had slept through, were falling off the bed. I knelt down and put my hand on her warm face. She was there.

The day before had been a warm day. A huge icicle hanging off the garage roof glinted in the sun. I broke it off and threw it at the hard ground. It shattered, filling the footprints I had made in yesterday's mud with sparkling shards. The two pieces of wood I had thrown in the stove sent a stream of smoke into the sky. It was a bright morning, and I stood squinting, looking up at the house where I knew Sarah was getting out of bed.

Ten minutes later, I heard a knock on the door. I opened it and Sarah stood outside, freezing in her bathrobe and slippers. She said, "I heard you this morning. I dreamed about you..." She looked past me, and stopped talking as her eyes widened. I turned around and for the first time realized that every carving was in her likeness. Every figure was a replication of some part of her face, her body.

This is what I think will happen if I become a widower: I will spend the rest of my life alone, feeling foolish, like a man laughing at a joke no one else understands. If my wife dies first, I will be free and empty, sitting in my car at a stoplight, laughing to myself out loud, and feeling foolish as hell. The people in surrounding cars will stare, then notice the empty place where my wife used to sit. I think this until I realize she is already gone. She has been gone, and people have been staring. That I think all of this surprises me.

We rarely fight. It never gets that far. What can anyone fight about? I often feel like one of the cats in a Buddhist temple, padding like a heathen around relics, jumping on the statues, never disturbing the worshippers. I feel as though when I touch her, I am really not touching her at all, that I would do better to put my hand on the lit burner of the gas stove, to walk away charred and hollering. That's how it is in this house. And I know that I am not the right man to say things. I am only fit to yell and she to laugh at my smoking fingers.

"It doesn't matter what I say," she said. "It doesn't matter what I tell you. I can tell you nothing." Last Tuesday, she suddenly burst out crying. She had the book of Psalms open on her lap. She got up and went into the kitchen.

We laugh together, my wife and I, sometimes. She came from the kitchen with a mug. I looked at her. She said, "It doesn't matter what I say. I'm going to bed."

"Stop," I said. The book was lying open on the couch. I heard her on the stairs, in the hall, shutting the bathroom door. These two lines, underlined in ink, lay on the page: "Pour out your heart like water/in the Presence of the Lord."

Water rushed into the bathtub. I knocked on the door. She said, "On the second day of creation, God separated the upper waters from the lower waters. The lower waters cried out, but He didn't hear. It has always been this way."

I walked softly down the stairs.

She said, "I feel as if I am floating beneath miles of ocean." □

MICHAEL NEUMANN

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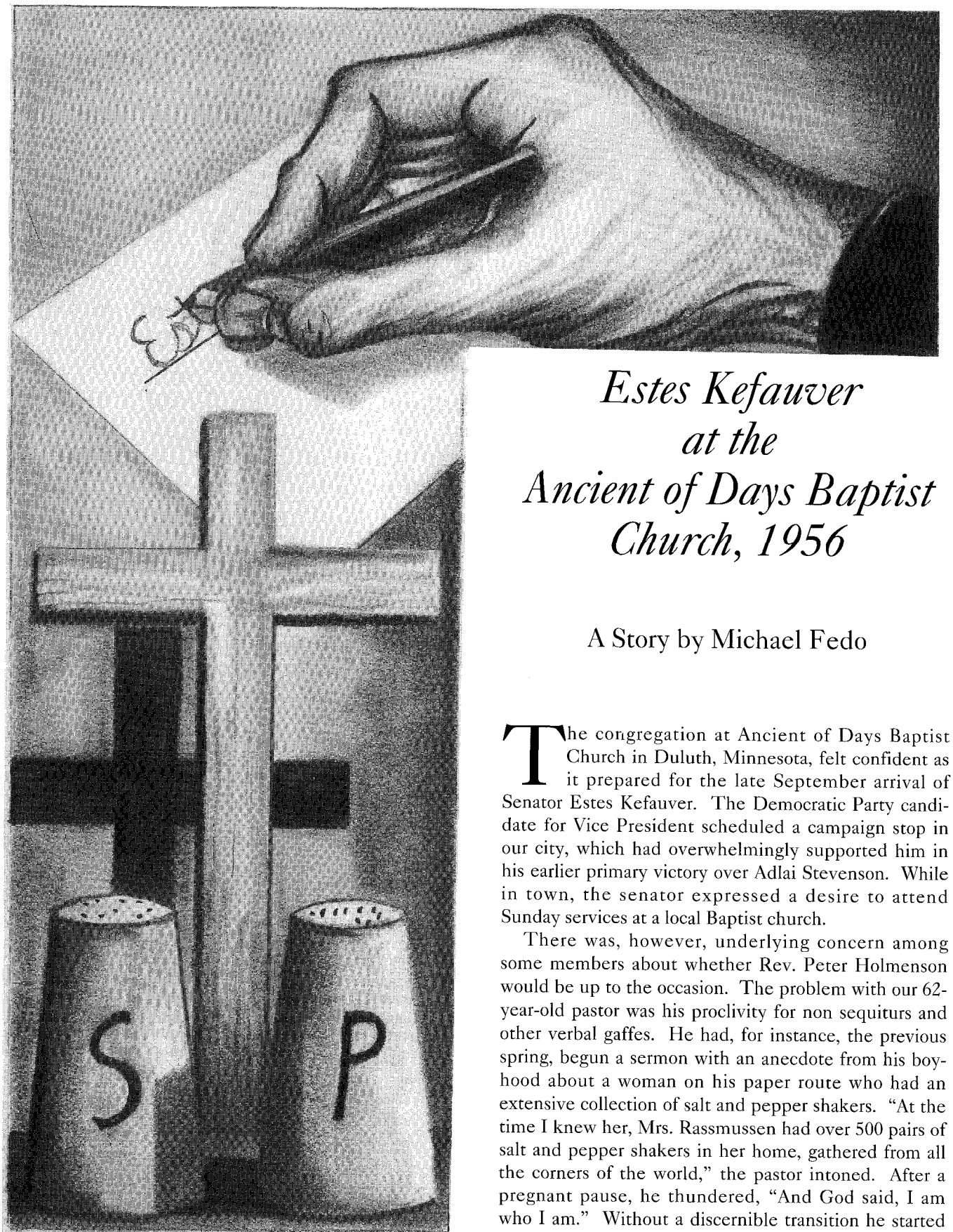

JON SIGMUND

Estes Kefauver at the Ancient of Days Baptist Church, 1956

A Story by Michael Fedo

The congregation at Ancient of Days Baptist Church in Duluth, Minnesota, felt confident as it prepared for the late September arrival of Senator Estes Kefauver. The Democratic Party candidate for Vice President scheduled a campaign stop in our city, which had overwhelmingly supported him in his earlier primary victory over Adlai Stevenson. While in town, the senator expressed a desire to attend Sunday services at a local Baptist church.

There was, however, underlying concern among some members about whether Rev. Peter Holmenson would be up to the occasion. The problem with our 62-year-old pastor was his proclivity for non sequiturs and other verbal gaffes. He had, for instance, the previous spring, begun a sermon with an anecdote from his boyhood about a woman on his paper route who had an extensive collection of salt and pepper shakers. "At the time I knew her, Mrs. Rassmussen had over 500 pairs of salt and pepper shakers in her home, gathered from all the corners of the world," the pastor intoned. After a pregnant pause, he thundered, "And God said, I am who I am." Without a discernible transition he started an exegesis on the book of Lamentations.

Some in the congregation, most notably Dr. Edmund

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"Gee" Williker, the only Baptist orthopedist in town, worried that the reverend might deliver another salt-and-pepper-shaker illustration and embarrass the church in front of national dignitaries and perhaps even a television audience. In a covert telephone campaign, Dr. Williker contacted many members, asking them to pray for Rev. Holmenson upon the occasion of Sen. Kefauver's visit, that his sermon would edify both our guests and the congregation.

Though mostly pleased at the prospect of so distinguished a visitor in our midst, and despite misgivings about Rev. Holmenson's capabilities, some members were ambivalent about the senator's politics. While there were a few laborers among the regulars who might have been Democrats, a majority of the congregation solidly supported the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket.

It was a shame, said Mrs. Evert Swenson, one of my grandmother's friends, that neither of those Republican gentlemen were Baptist. We'd simply have to be content with what we could get, she said, adding that at least he wasn't like that scoundrel Truman, who also claimed to be a Baptist.

Rev. Holmenson apparently was unaware of Gee Williker's telephoning, but was stressed because the board of elders had recently complained both about the excessive length, and quality of his sermons. Ours was a fractious congregation, and ministers were frequently dismissed. Rev. Holmenson's predecessor, Rev. Bleuer, was let go for dressing well; he sometimes wore a blazer instead of a modest dark suit in the pulpit. His attire detracted from the Word, was how the charge was leveled.

Rev. Holmenson's sartorial repertoire never departed from black or gray wool suits, summer and winter, and whenever the warmth on a summer's Sunday got the better of him, he always asked the congregation's permission to remove his coat. He would never consider loosening his tie, or rolling the sleeves on his shirt. In the matter of dress, at least, he was on solid ground.

His hermeneutics, however, were another matter. The reverend's tangential anecdotes and explanations drifted; he sometimes got lost in the text of his sermons, and had to ask his wife where he had been before spinning through the maelstrom of restatement and clarification. Whenever he strayed into an aside beginning: "Let me put this another way," he was apt to wander entirely from his thesis and go on for 40 minutes or more before finding an exit and a conclusion.

One time, Ethan Grote, our long-time organist, dozed off during one of the pastor's seamless monologues and toppled onto the keys, producing a loud dischord. Several somnolent worshippers scrambled to their feet, believing the opening of the Doxology had sounded.

Prior to the Kefauver visit, however, our pastor put on a confident face. He told the congregation that he hoped his message would be especially relevant. "There's been much discussion recently in magazines and newspapers about the music young people listen to these days. It's called rock and roll, and if you ask me, it's a lot of jangle and noise. God doesn't like that kind of music. Thus, I'll speak about modern music, and hope the message will fall on the right ears, and this abomination can be nipped in the bud."

He then said that we might want to prepare ourselves for his sermon, by reading and meditating upon the first three verses of Psalm 33. "I've given the text to the Secret Service to pass along to the senator, and I trust he'll study it in advance of his arrival here."

On the eventful Sunday, the sanctuary was filled beyond capacity, and ushers had to bring in folding chairs to accommodate the crowd—many of whom were visitors, hoping for a handshake with a national celebrity. According to Mother—whose Republican vote always canceled Dad's ballot—Senator Kefauver had many fine qualities for a Democrat, and certainly was out to see to it that criminals paid for their transgressions. His investigations into organized crime had been generally well-received in Duluth, though my Italian father was somewhat annoyed about the attention given to Sicilian Mafiosi. "Let's not forget that Joe DiMaggio is Italian," he argued. "And so is Toscanini, and Enrico Fermi."

Dad had been, however, much peeved when Frank Costello continually pleaded the Fifth Amendment during the Kefauver hearings, and that the television cameras always focused on the mobster's hands, never showing his face.

"I don't understand why they won't let us see that bum squirm when he's questioned," Dad had said. "Then he has the gall to say, 'I refuse to answer that question on the grounds that it may tend to incriminate me.' Well, of course. That's the whole point, isn't it? To incriminate him and get him out of our hair."

Dad, who was not Baptist, nonetheless showed up with us that Sunday to meet Estes Kefauver. He put on a natty gray sport coat, navy slacks, black wing-tips. He looked like a Republican sitting in the pew with Mom, my brother, Geoff and me. Republican males in our congregation wore shined wingtip shoes; Democrats tended toward worn brown oxfords.

Senator Kefauver and his entourage entered during the opening hymn, and were escorted to their roped-off pew by head usher Dave Trepanske, a staunch Republican, and successful insurance salesman, who smiled at the senator and shook his hand before seating him.

Most of us focused on Kefauver while Rev. Holmenson made general announcements followed by a

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rather effusive welcome to our visitors. Dr. Williker winced as Rev. Holmenson asked each guest to please fill out the visitor's card in the pew.

Every head craned to see if Kefauver would fill out the card.

He did; his large, bony hand dwarfing the nub of pencil provided for the registration. An aide, however, gave him a pen, and the senator scrawled his name on the card, which Dave Trepanske quickly retrieved.

"I bet he keeps it," Dad whispered to Mother, who frowned, and pinched his knee.

The lanky politician turned in his pew and folded his hands in his lap as Rev. Holmenson started his sermon. "Turn with me, if you will, to the thirty-third Psalm, reading verses one through three. 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.'

"I earlier told this congregation that I would be preaching on this text, because, you see, we are at a crossroads in America. And in this Psalm, the poet has a right understanding of what music is meant to accomplish in the world. It is to be used to praise Almighty God. With the harp we are to praise Him, and sing unto Him a new song with psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

"Now today, we see emerging a new, popular sort of music called rock and roll. It is indeed loud," Rev. Holmenson said, holding his hands over his ears and grimacing.

Scattered tittering arose from the sanctuary. Sen. Kefauver offered a wan smile.

"Be that as it may, there aren't many churches today where you see a harp. I have brought this to the attention of our governing boards, and Lord willing, we may soon rectify the situation. For I believe that if we are commanded by God to praise Him with the harp, then we should.

"I mean no disrespect to the organ, nor to our very talented organist, Mr. Grote, but I believe we should at all times be in compliance with what is revealed in the scriptures.

"As you may know, a harp is an instrument of considerable cost. Should you feel so moved, I urge you to designate a special offering and mark it for purchase of a harp.

"I should very much like to add the psaltery to our service as well, but in calling around to various music stores in our community, I find that psalteries are apparently no longer manufactured." Rev. Holmenson smiled, and wiped perspiration from his nose and upper lip. Sen. Kefauver did not smile; he crossed his legs.

Dr. Williker, seated in the second-row pew, stirred, and glanced at his watch.

Rev. Holmenson took a sip of water, clutched both sides of the pulpit and bore on. "If I may, I'd like to relate an incident from my own life by way of illustration. I know there are those of you here this morning who don't believe in attending motion pictures on moral grounds. I can't fault you for that. There's much that's objectionable in today's movies. Be that as it may, there are also some quite splendid pictures, suitable for the entire family. Several of them reveal important principles by which we might improve our own earthly lives. One such film, made by Walt Disney, I believe does just this. In my humble opinion, it is probably the greatest motion picture ever made. 'Bambi.'" He paused.

The senator leaned forward, and an audible groan escaped Dr. Williker.

"Those of you who've seen it will recall that memorable scene where the young prince Bambi is crying over the body of his dead mother. Bambi is depressed, defeated, and lost. But there on the hilltop appears the great stag of the forest, Bambi's father, who calls to him: 'Get up, Bambi. Get up, Bambi.' And Bambi gets up, and follows his father, whom he trusts, to a secure place. So, too, it is with us. In those moments when I allow myself to lapse into depression and I'm feeling sorry for myself, my faithful wife will come into the study and say to me, 'Bambi, get up. Get up, Bambi.'"

Sen. Kefauver tilted his head toward a grinning aide, nodded at something the aide whispered. Lights from television cameras seemed to distract Rev. Holmenson momentarily. "So you see, bretheren, when the Lord calls us to our task, He's telling us to stop feeling down in the dumps, and to get up. 'Get up, Bambi,' He seems to be saying. And in this Psalm, we are to get up, to offer the appropriate praise, and as Bambi willingly followed his father to safety, so too are we to follow our heavenly Father to the safety of His sheltering wings." He paused, scanned his notes, then murmured, "Amen."

Ethan Grote scrambled to his position on the organ, unprepared for the brevity of this sermon, and struck the opening chords of the Doxology.

Dr. Williker's ears crimsoned, and he did not rise during the Doxology when the rest of the congregation stood.

We remained standing while Rev. Holmenson led us in closing prayer. Then Ethan Grote launched into a recessional, which was severely criticized after Estes Kefauver's departure because the melody was derived from the cowboy ballad, "Streets of Laredo." The more fractious boys among us sang, "As I walked out on the streets of Laredo, as I walked out in Laredo one day. . ." as we moved slowly toward the exit, where the senator shook each hand, exchanging pleasantries with worshippers, especially those wearing

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Stevenson-Kefauver buttons. He stood in the church narthex and seemed pleased to be with us, shaking hands with men, accepting hugs from a few women, and making small talk about their lovely hats or gloves. "I should buy a hat like that for my wife," he said to Mrs. Owen Lofgren, and she blushed, speechless.

"I'm afraid it's time for Rev. Holmenson to step aside," Dr. Williker said in the cloak room to Andrew Swanson, congregation president. "We'll need to call the boards together to discuss this."

"Aw, Gee, except for forgetting to have the ushers take the collection, I don't think he did too bad," Andrew said.

"But what in the world possessed Ethan to play that cowboy song? I can't believe he'd do a thing like that. I'm wondering if we shouldn't write a letter apologizing to Mr. Kefauver. He might take offense and think it was for him, that some folks here regard him as a cowboy. I'm really quite upset about it."

So were a lot of other folks, and though no letter was written to the senator, Ethan Grote was removed as organist after serving the church nearly 45 years.

At the end of October, Rev. Holmenson read a note he'd received from Sen. Kefauver to the congregation. It stated that the senator was honored to have worshipped at Ancient of Days Baptist Church. "I share with you many of the concerns voiced by your pastor," he wrote. "I assure you that one is not likely to hear such expressions in many sermons, and I've attended a great many services during my campaigning around this great country of ours. Please give my kindest regards to all who took time to shake my hand, or offer a word of encouragement while I was with you last month." Rev. Holmenson folded the letter and said he would place it on the bulletin board in the narthex so that we might read it for ourselves.

Six months later, Rev. Holmenson accepted a call to pastor a church in Osseo, Wisconsin.

On his final Sunday with us our preacher seemed at ease, smiling from the pulpit as he gazed over his flock. He began by saying that each of us in this life is on a journey, and there are many stops along the way. By way of illustration, he chose as his text Numbers, chapter 33. His reading voice was sonorous; he rolled his Rs' and affected an Oxford accent.

" . . .And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai. And they removed from the desert of Sinai and pitched at Kibrothhattaavah. . . And they departed from Hazeroth and pitched in Rithmah. And they departed from Rithmah, and pitched at Rimmonparez. . . ."

This continued for 20 verses, Rev. Holmenson beaming as he read. "As you can tell, the children of Israel did an awful lot of pitching and departing. And so it is with us. Whenever we think we've done about all the departing and pitching we can stand, we need only hearken to the pitching and departing of the children of Israel, and no matter how many pitchings and departings come into our lives, they just don't come close to measuring up to those of our friend Moses and his whole nation as they searched for the promised land. It might be said, that all of life is pitching and departing. Wherever we are pitched, why there we remain until the time of our departing.

"This reminds me of the visit paid by Senator Estes Kefauver to this place not so very many months ago. A man in public life, such as the good senator, no doubt had to endure far more pitchings and departings than most of us care to imagine. He made a pitch for the presidency, and then another pitch for the vice presidency of our great nation. But he wasn't successful, was he? No, I daresay he was not. But he was here in our midst for a brief time, and we saw him, we shook his hand, we wished him well. . . ."

Rev. Holmenson paused, took a sip of water, and leaned over the pulpit, his round face creasing into a warm smile. "When I was a very young boy, about the age of some of the youngsters here this morning, I loved to play baseball. It won't surprise many of you to know that I wanted to pitch for a baseball team in the big leagues. At the time, my favorite pitcher was Walter Johnson. The very best pitcher of his time, and maybe of all time. They used to call him the Big Train. I don't know why. But he was not only a great pitcher, but also a very fine Christian gentleman. Oh, that there were more pitchers like Walter Johnson playing baseball today." Rev. Holmenson scanned his notes, and coughed several times. He excused himself and went on.

"So, it is with some sadness that my lovely, faithful bride, Lilian, and I are departing from our family here at Ancient of Days, and we will be pitching every Sunday morning in Osseo, Wisconsin, where, speaking of baseball—should any of you ever drive to Milwaukee to see a major league baseball game, Lilian and I would hope that you would stop in to see us either on your way down, or on the way back. Makes no difference to us."

He cleared his throat. "All of us are called in life to pitch and depart. We depart Duluth, but you'll still be pitching here, and should the Lord call us back here, why it's a fine place to pitch, and we'd be pleased to." He scanned the congregation for a moment before pronouncing, "Amen."

As we wended our way to the door to shake hands with Rev. and Lilian Holmenson, Jared Hoover, one of the trustees, turned around and announced to those within earshot, "Well, Rev. Holmenson may not have been everybody's cup of cocoa, but it's not likely we'll see another preacher like him any time soon." □

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Playing for the Door

They work hard to buy their first electric guitars. They deliver papers or pizzas, mow lawns or sell magazine subscriptions door-to-door. Their grandparents are disappointed, sure, at first, when they find out the kids have given up the cornet, the tuba, the bass drum, but they agree to match funds to buy their first amplifiers. The players agree to pay them back whenever they have the money, or in ninety-nine years, whichever comes first.

At the music store where they go to buy the equipment, the lady behind the counter winks at their father. The players wonder, does she know something they don't? They practice for months, years, in their bedrooms, in their basements, or at some friend's house whose parents are gone for the weekend. They listen to records and try to make themselves sound just like the person on the record. Sometimes they do, but mostly they sound like themselves trying to sound like somebody else. Eventually they meet a couple of guys at school who have guitars too. One has a mom who's really cool so she lets the group practice in her basement. They set up their equipment on the cement floor between the washer and dryer, the nautilus machine and the ping-pong table. Sometimes their friend's mom comes downstairs to start a load of clothes. She has a high, singing laugh that makes her seem younger. She smokes short cigarettes and wears short cigarette pants that show off her ankle bones and the swinging curve of her bottom as she climbs the stairs. There's no cool dad in sight, the players notice, but they do not talk about this.

ii.

That summer their girlfriend decides to throw a sweet sixteen party in the backyard of her parents' palatial mansion. She also throws a screaming tantrum, locks herself in her chiffon bedroom, makes long distance phone calls, and smokes roll-your-owns until her parents agree to let the players play.

There's no money involved, but there is free food, and all the Coke they can drink. The band only knows eleven songs, but nobody appears to mind. They play the same set over and over, rounding out the hours with a special thirty-five minute rendition of "Cocaine." The drummer is shirtless, his thin ribs glistening with sweat. The guitar player leans back in his tennis shoes and plays with his tongue hanging out.

Between sets a juggling comedian who also plays the bugle takes the stage. At the first chortle of the horn, the young kids stream to the bandstand, ribbons flowing behind them. They are lured away from white ponies and croquet, huddling in the grass watching the red-faced clown as if he were Elvis.

The players attack the appetizers, palming shrimp canapés and popping them in their mouths like M & Ms. They are not right for the suburbs, they decide. There's too much sunlight and fresh air, and no cruel failure or irony here. They need the grit of downtown streets. They need darkness and black leather and brick walls around them. Mostly, they wish to suffer.

Within days they begin to work up original music in the event that a major recording label happens to seek them out. They learn other songs too, but are careful not to learn anything that's popular or on the radio at the time. After this, their girlfriend seems to like them a lot better.

iii.

That fall their older brother hires them for a party in the basement of his frat house. There's no money involved, the older brother explains, but there are kegs of beer and plenty of college women roaming around. Early in the night a fistfight breaks out and their P.A. gets knocked over. Later, after half the keg cups have been spilled on the floor, they realize they've set up their equipment directly over the floor drain.

As the gray sludge of creme de menthe and brown beer oozes toward them, they lift their sticky feet and take a break to discuss the problem. In a huddle, they vote to risk it all—the ruin of their shoes, the welfare of their equipment, and the possibility of electrocution. Isn't that what Hendrix did at Woodstock?

It's a surly crowd, everyone standing around in their button-down shirts and jeans, their over-developed biceps and close-cropped crew cuts. They don't applaud after the songs, but, the players decide, they're too in awe to clap—the players have so deeply moved them. Besides, who one can clap with keg cups in their hands?

iv.

One of the frat brothers is from a town about sixty miles away where, he says, there's a club that would be just perfect for their band to play. There's no money involved, you understand, but you could play for the door, and just think of the exposure you'd be getting.

So they rent a P.A. because their last one got toasted at the frat party, and they rent a U-Haul to transport the extra equipment, and their friend's cool mom lends them her Oldsmobile with the hitch on the back.

They get out of town late that day because their drum-

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mer is sleeping when they go to pick him up. As they get to the edge of town there's a long, slow train passing through, so just to be kind of rock 'n rollish they flip off the guy in the caboose as he rolls by.

These big old cars were meant to go ninety, they figure, as they cruise down Highway 10. When the hot light comes on, they assume it's a manufacturer's defect, something their friend's cool mom forgot to tell them about. It's not until later, after they get the equipment unloaded that they notice the large pool of oil under the car.

v.

The bar is called "The Joker is Wild." The club owner has a white shock of electric hair and a crazy eye that glances randomly at the ceiling as he grabs their hands in his iron grip. After they extricate their picking fingers, numb now and a bit shaken, they wonder if they'll ever play a guitar solo again.

As they set up, stringing cords and checking amplifier levels, some country-western songs about cheatin' and fightin' and lovin' and screwin' blare from the speakers above. Slowly the blood returns to their soloing fingers. Buoyed by this, they joke around about the crusty old maniac who owns the bar, and everyone decides to change the name of the club to "The Owner is Wild."

A STORY BY DEBRA MARQUART

vi.

Before they play, they have a band meeting and decide to take very long breaks and play very short sets. That way they hope no one will notice they're repeating every song at least twice. Their drummer, who's obsessed with counting, counts all the people in the club during breaks. He says there are over one hundred people, not counting the comers and goers. At two bucks a pop that makes two hundred bucks, easy. He's busy trying to decide whether he'll buy Paiste or Zildjian cymbals with all the dough they're making.

At the end of the night the owner blinks his crazy eye at the ceiling and reaches under the counter, dipping his shoulder and resting his right palm on what they can only assume is the cherrywood handle of a loaded revolver. Then he reaches into his left pocket and dumps their cut of the door in a tangled wad of bills on the counter.

The drummer steps forward to count, smoothes the bills, all the while tapping his foot in eighth notes on the wood floor. He counts and counts again. Each time it comes out to 25 dollars. That makes five bucks each. The owner says it's because A) they were too loud, B) nobody liked them, and C) they're not old enough to be in this club anyway so they better get the hell out or he's gonna call the sheriff.

They walk to the phone booth on the corner. They call home and ask their dad to come and pick them up. They also ask for twelve hundred bucks to replace the engine in their friend's cool mom's car.

vii.

Here is the story the players know so well, because it happened to them. The way their girlfriend didn't mind paying for all the drinks and all the movies and, later, all the motel rooms and all the concert tickets. The way they toodled around in her sporty, fruit-colored compact, all the time pretending that her car belonged to both of them.

They remember the job at Burger King, or Pizza Hut, or Kmart where they started working to pay off their relatives. How the shifts cut into their practice time and the night manager watched them like a hawk because they were musicians and he thought they might A) be on drugs, B) try to steal something, or C) try to get out of working Friday and Saturday nights.

They remember how their dad kept a comfortable distance from them, because he knew if he was too friendly to them at any given moment, the players would ask him for more money. And the way that everyone in the band quit, one by one, and was replaced by others who quit, always for the same reason—no money, and eventually, man, you've got to do something with your life.

viii.

They probably remember best the way friends laughed that funny kind of nervous laugh when they asked what the players were planning to do when they grew up. The friends, who had gone to graduate school, gotten jobs, families, and houses, knew they were being middle-class and cliché by asking, but still, they wanted to know.

Finally the players noticed that all those guys in Hewlett-Packard commercials had nice-looking wives waiting for them in cushy condos, and as they navigated slippery mountain roads in their sports cars talking on their cell phones they never once appeared to be gazing at the hot light. So they went back to school and changed their majors from music or art, to business or marketing with a computer science minor.

How about the way they winked at the lady behind the counter of the music store when they sold their equipment back to her. Or the way they still go to nightclubs with their lovely wives and tell stories about their many years as a musician—the details growing dimmer, the stories growing sweeter with each telling. □

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KJERSTI A. REED

Since Monday

Since Monday, each morning
precisely at seven, I wake
to ladders rattling
rungs against the eaves
from three directions,
a plank belly flops
the double-steep
roof, and feet stomp up.
Then someone nails
the roof jacks to studs
to cradle the plank that Jeff,
or Bill, or Allen will stride
like cats, or kneel upon, a prayer
bench before the ancient
shingles—sun-split, wind-slurred,
or slipped from tucks.
So many men laboring
above me while I lie
naked in the fluid
caress of the water
bed, its bulk responding
to only my choice
of positions. They're pounding
and banging into this echo
chamber—so much attention
finally paid to my
house, so long ignored
by so many men. Now,
I can have all of them
working all week, and no
strings—no dinners

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to be served at 5:00 p.m.,
no work shirts to iron,
and when I'm tired and only
want sleep, no man pushes
my head down to lick
his cock, demanding this
most personal of all
things as if I were hired.
Or like all those times
I've been fucked
in showers on secret
weekends out of town. All that sex
he'd saved up from his
marriage pumped into me.
He introduced me to galleries
and museums I'd never
seen. Held my hand
in the basement of the LA
County our first
time, silent in the presence
of those Assyrian kings
he admired so much, towering
in bas-relief, stone rosettes for hair,
each panel of granite
chiseled one side
of a figure.
All of them taller
than me.

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The Low Frequencies of the Universe

A STORY BY PHILIP HELDRICH

Since Maurice began believing he's a poet, he's done nothing but act depressed and claim he'll be rescued by a girl named Helen. Maurice hasn't gone to school for days, and it's a small miracle he shows up for work. Mostly, he mopes about the house talking to himself and repeating his best lines aloud, as if someone, somewhere in Kansas were listening. His younger sister, who's studying Shakespeare in English class, calls him "Hamlet," though Maurice doesn't think it's funny. "Stop muttering," his mother tells him, but it only makes matters worse. She blames his problems on the changing weather, the gray autumn days and cooler nights with hard blowing prairie winds. Everybody seems worried about Maurice.

When his father asks him why he isn't going to school, Maurice refuses to answer. "There must be something you can tell us, Maury?" his father asks, but Maurice just shrugs his shoulders. He knows his father cares, wants to see his son become something more than a supervisor at the IBP beef plant, though Maurice doesn't know what to tell him. If answering such questions isn't bad enough, he hates to be called Maury, which everybody has called him since childhood. In cow towns like this, names stick to a person like burrs in a field.

When his parents don't seem worried about Maurice graduating from high school, Maurice knows they worry if he's gay. The first time Maurice painted his toenails pink, they said it was only a fad. Now he even paints his fingernails. He likes black but sometimes uses his sister's red. His teachers called about the fingernails after some jock on the football team complained about sharing the locker room with him. In such a small town, Maurice knows all about small minds. The school said the polish would have to come off, but Maurice refused. They said he might be expelled, but Maurice didn't care. Instead, he pierced his ear in two places and wore to school his mother's silver hoops. Maurice dyes his long hair black and wears baggy jeans so big his underwear shows. He even talks about taking another boy to his prom, but his sister says its only a threat, that he's still in love with Joline. "Mr. Poet lover boy," his sister taunts him, but as Maurice gets ready for work, he ignores everything she says.

Joline is Maurice's girlfriend, though getting him to admit it is something else. Joline feels one day Maurice will be a great poet, will one day write beautiful poems about her and sell lots of books. Like Maurice, she dresses for funerals and wears black nail polish. Maurice's mother says Joline's a bad influence, but it's really the other way around. Joline's as normal as any girl can be who's raised by a single mom who waitresses at the trucker bar on the out-

CASEY CHRISTOFFERSON

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skirts of town. Both Joline and her mother have tatoos on their shoulders, and who knows where else. Joline's is a heart with an arrow through it. From far away, Maurice thinks it looks like a vaccination scar. Her mother's mark is an eagle with outstretched wings. Like Maurice, Joline dyes her hair black, as if her natural blond isn't good enough for anyone. Joline says stuff like "Who cares?" and "So what?" She says nothing Maurice didn't once say. Joline smokes, too, but Maurice believes nicotine blurs his thinking.

Maurice refuses to say Joline's his official girlfriend and hates it when she calls him Maury. If asked, he says his love is Helen, though nobody knows any girl in town named Helen. "She's not from around here," he tells whoever cares to listen. "You will only find her standing at the edge of a burning city." In his pockets, he carries slips of paper that say stuff like "Dearest Helen," "Helen, my love," and "Save me, Helen." His mother finds these when she does the laundry. She's phoned all her friends to ask if they think Maurice has an obsession and promises to get to the bottom of the story. Maurice knows nobody likes to get her calls, how they all think she's the reason for his troubles, but he knows even that's too easy.

As Maurice kisses his mother on his way out the door for work, she asks why he doesn't have the same goals as the rest of the young men in town who want jobs at the plant where his father works. "They're good, solid jobs," she tells him. "In a town like ours, you can't complain about such opportunity." Whenever he passes the plant, Maurice can't stand the smell, something worse than rotten dog food, or the way the cows stand cramped in pens before their slaughter. Maurice says after graduating that he's leaving town for good, says he's going somewhere far like San Francisco, maybe even Guadalajara. "Why would anybody want to move to Texas?" his mother asks. Maurice can only shrug his shoulders, knows that she's only worried that he'll move too far away. Joline says she's going with Maurice, though he has no plans for taking her along. In his room, Maurice has an atlas where he's marked out all the spots he'd like to go. He figures he can thumb his way most places or take a bus if needed, like one of those silver Greyhounds that pulls into town every three days with signs for Los Angeles or Chicago across the tops of their windshield. The only bus he's ever taken is a school bus but feels Greyhound can't be much different. Joline, who once took a bus to Dodge to visit cousins, says buses are really great. She's told Maurice all about the reclining seats and how hard it is to pee in the small stainless steel toilet in back. Maurice thinks she acts like a bus expert, so he calls her the "buxpert." He likes to make up words, the way he thinks all good poets do. "Hey, buxpert," he says, "which way to Strong City?" and Joline pretends not to listen.

The bus idea lasted until Maurice read *On the Road*. Now he thinks it would be fun to drive a beater around the country to places like Denver, Salt Lake, and Seattle, where everything is happening these days. He only wishes he could save enough money for a car, so he works afternoons and weekends at the local Sonic Burger. He's a grill cook, who hates hamburgers because he's a vegetarian. When his family has meatloaf for dinner, Maurice eats tofu or baked noodles. He eats lots of beans, too, because he feels raising cattle is wasteful. When his boss, Ms. Bixley, isn't watching, he writes on the insides of the burger wrappers, stuff like "Meat Kills" or "Stop the Senseless Butchering." Nobody yet has complained. Maurice figures that his words get lost in the grease or buried under a pile of ketchup. He thinks this is the fate of all good writers. Everybody at home seems real happy Maurice works at Sonic. They even try not to laugh at him in his red and white uniform. Maurice hates to wear the cap but figures it helps keep the grease out of his hair. He's the only cook at Sonic with black nail polish. Ms. Bixley doesn't care, since she too wears nail polish.

The best part of the job, Maurice tells Joline, is the people. "You never know who might drive up for a burger."

"You mean like Thelma and Louise," she says.

"Something like that," he tells her. Joline tells him the people who go to Sonic are slobs, this coming from a girl in whose house laundry is piled to the ceiling. Maurice says some people eat Sonic burgers for every meal. "They just keep coming back, like they can't stop themselves." Maurice has already recognized one of those people as the school football coach, Mr. Harper. He's a big guy with a huge gut, and hair so thick on his arms and legs he looks like an overstuffed teddy in gym shorts. The coach, who always wears a whistle around his neck even when he goes to Sonic, walks the halls at school saying stuff like "the bigger you are the harder to knock down," but Maurice now knows where such logic begins.

"Is Maury in there?" he asks when he drives up for his afternoon burger. His voice sounds scratchy over the speaker. "It's about time you come back to school," he says and all the workers inside can hear him loud and clear. "You do want to graduate?" he says. In the background everybody can hear the coach's radio tuned to the golden oldies station, the one which plays sappy songs from the early sixties when the whole country seemed high and happy. Maurice knows the Sonic drive-in is supposed to bring back those loving feelings, times when socks had fag-

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got names like bobby and people wore hair in hives. "Listen, Maury," the coach says with a bit of rasp in his voice, "be a man!" He shouts so loud, the speaker crackles, the way he pumps up his team on his loudspeaker before a big game. Everybody inside Sonic laughs, even the girls mixing malts. Maurice has heard it all before, especially from his father when he's had a few beers after work. It seems everybody in town has advice for Maurice. "Make it the usual," the coach says, and everybody knows it's double-cheese with extra pickles.

If the coach isn't enough, there is always Joline's mom. She, too, is a regular Sonic customer. Every afternoon on her way to work she orders a sixty-four ounce cherry cola Big Gulp. "Make it two cherries, easy on the ice," she says, as if ordering cocktails at the trucker bar. "And have Maury bring it out." Maurice doesn't like to come out of the building, doesn't like too many people to see him in his uniform, but Ms. Bixley makes him take out the drink. "The customer is always right," she tells Maurice and shoves him out the door.

"You're so slow," Joline's mom says when she rolls down the window to take her Big Gulp. "You people need to get hopping." When he hands her the drink Maurice tries not to look down her shirt or at her bare legs. To get lots of tips at the trucker bar, Joline's mom has to wear low cut tops and short skirts. After checking her out, Maurice feels like giving her a dollar. He loves her curvy body, which is even better than Joline's, since Joline eats too many chips while watching television. He's even let it cross his mind what it might be like to go for a drive with her out in the country.

"You got change for a twenty," she says and lights up a cigarette. Maurice hates the fact she smokes, but figures it's only a minor problem considering how much else she has to offer. People in town think Joline's mom is "loose," a "floozy like her daughter." Maurice ignores all the criticism. He know they're just jealous because she's so hot. He imagines his Helen might look something like Joline's mom, the curly blond hair, the thin legs. He tries to picture her standing before a burning city.

"You better get back inside, boy," she says. "They won't tolerate any loafers." He used to hate it when she called him boy, but now he thinks it's sexy. She talks in a way she knows more about the world than anybody in town. "When you get off work, go check on Joline," she tells him. He likes the fact she counts on him to look after her daughter. "Now get moving," she says. She revs up her Mustang's engine and peels away with her tires spinning.

For the rest of the afternoon until the coach shows up for another double-cheese, Maurice thinks about Joline's mom, especially the way he sometimes massages her feet when she comes home from work. He flips patties and dreams about going into the trucker bar to order drinks from her. He puts cheese on the burgers and thinks about driving her Mustang while she rests snug against his shoulder. He browns buns and feels there must be some way for her to notice him. All this time, he thinks up poems with lines like "the curve of your buttocks" or "the warmth of your soft breast," but he knows it all sounds bad, even the words "buttocks" and "breast," which he likes much better for a poem than tits and ass. He knows he has the poetic spirit, but worries about making the lines sound right.

On some nights, when Maurice gets off work, he doesn't go over to Joline's to check on her but instead rides his bicycle to the edge of town. It's real dark and he has to pedal hard against the wind. It's all uphill on the way there, but downhill the way back. Maurice likes to go to the top of Hegarty Hill, which overlooks the town. It's too steep to ride up his bicycle, so Maurice leaves his wheels at the bottom and walks the rest of the way. When he's at the top, he likes to imagine the hill is all his own, but knows you can't really own nature. On clear nights, there are so many stars to be seen. Maurice believes for sure there's life out there, just like his science teacher, Mr. McCorkle, tells him. Maurice likes Mr. McCorkle, feels he's tuned into the world in a way all his own. He's single and refuses to wear ties like all the other men teachers. He has a mustache, too, the only teacher in the school with one. Since the school board thinks he should teach creationism alongside evolution, he says stuff like "it's up to you to decide the nature of the universe." He does this after showing slides of supernovas and galaxies bigger than the Milky Way. When Maurice looks at all the stars, he knows Mr. McCorkle is right.

The winds blow stronger on the top of Hegarty Hill than they do in town. Maurice likes to hold out his arms and feel the wind seem to lift him off the ground. He wonders what it might be like to jump off the hill on a day the wind's real strong. He wonders if Newton's law will hold even on such a day.

Other nights after work, Maurice goes over to Joline's. She's usually watching television when he arrives. Maurice can't stand TV., especially the kind of TV that Joline watches, sitcoms with complaining kids or cop shows with bald detectives. Maurice feels everybody on television should be beautiful because people watch to forget their own sad lives. "Why don't you read a book sometime," he tells Joline, but she ignores him, puts chips in her mouth instead. Some nights while watching the tube, Joline eats a whole bag of chips or an entire container of ice cream.

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"You're should cut back on the snacks, Joline, or you're going to balloon up like a giant peach."

"So what," she says. "You only like me because of my body?"

The question catches Maurice off guard. He tries to think about the real reasons he likes her—the way she's always there for him and says what she means, the fact that she thinks he'll become a big writer, especially when everybody else figures he'll end up at IBP with his father. Joline's never pressured him about school, hasn't asked him all week if he's going back. In her own way, Joline's his life-saver. Maurice thinks about the night he had a falling out with his parents over the nail polish and spent the night at Joline's. He thinks about how they've planned road trips across the country and how they've talked about the true meaning of love. He remembers the night she found out from her mother that her father is a lawyer in town who won't admit she's his child, the way they drove over to his big house and rang the doorbell to confront him, but his wife turned them away. They've been dating for a year-and-a-half and Maurice sometimes wonders how it all will end, if it ever does. He can't understand how he can like Joline the way he does, but still have such man feelings for her mother.

It's nights like these that make Maurice depressed. He'll go home and won't be able to sleep. He might not even show up for work at Sonic in the afternoon. Instead, he'll spend the day alone on Hegarty Hill, or down by the Neosho river where he used to go fishing with his father. It worries Joline when he gets this way. Sometimes, when he gets real down, he says he doesn't feel a thing, that he doesn't care what happens to him or to anybody in the whole world, except perhaps his mother and sister. Maurice thinks it's worse on gray days when the sun seems to go away forever. He gets to feeling that he just wants to disappear.

On days like these, Maurice thinks about walking out to the county highway and just keep walking, past the Sonic Burger, past the trucker bar, as far as he can go until his shoes wear out. He wonders how long it would take to walk to Colorado or even California, but he knows already California isn't a place for him. He worries if he'll ever find the right place, if there is anywhere for him in the whole wide world.

Other times when he's got the blues, he steals a few of his mother's Valium. He pops them down with a glass of o.j. and waits in his bedroom for them to take effect. Even when he's all doped up, the blah's don't go away. Nobody knows he takes his mother's little helpers, but they don't seem to give him much relief. He wonders why his mother takes them at all, or if taking a few more might help him feel better. Maurice figures there's two sides to life, the up and the down, that perhaps poets have an extra sensitivity to the down. He knows how they can see into the life of things, recognize all the sad faces, all the holes that exist in the world which need filling. He figures even the universe is that way. He believes what Mr. McCorkle tells him, that in space there's a silence, black holes, light years of darkness. He knows the only way to hear what the universe is saying is to listen carefully, that underneath the silence exist the unheard low frequencies, the voices of outer space. He gets these big ideas usually when he feels he could drop off the planet.

He's tried to tell Joline these things but she falls asleep or flips the channel. He's told his family that in space there's light and dark matter, that everybody is some combination of the two. His sister says Maurice needs to see a shrink, that he spends too much time with that weirdo, Mr. McCorkle. His parents figure it's just another of his phases. Maurice knows it's not just a phase but that he's discovered the true way of the world. It's something he plans to write about when he becomes real famous. When he's down, he figures he's just been given more dark matter than most people, that this is what makes him a poet. He figures all poets speak of the low frequencies of the universe which need to be heard.

By the time Maurice finishes talking, Joline has fallen asleep on the couch. If it's a week night, Joline's mom might get home around twelve or one, but if it's a weekend she might be out till three, maybe four in the morning. Maurice usually waits for her. When Joline's mom gets home from work, she looks worn out, like somebody drained the cute right out of her. Her short skirt has lost its pleats and her top has stains from who knows what kinds of drinks. Even her blond curls have given up, but Maurice still thinks she's pretty. She's one of those women who can't look bad, even when mascara runs down her cheeks when she cries, which is what happens sometimes after long nights at work. "How was your night?" Maurice says, like he's playing the husband.

"Same as all the rest," she tells him, the bounce missing from her voice. "Maybe you should go home, Maury," she says, plopping down on the recliner with clothes drooping off its back.

"Can I get you anything?" he asks.

"I'm fine," she says, "maybe a beer." Maurice goes to the refrigerator, grabs two cold cans of Schaeffer Light. She only drinks light because she watches her figure, doesn't want to get too big, risk getting fired from her job.

"You shouldn't be drinking our beer," she says. "What if you leave here, drive home and kill somebody?"

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"I don't drive," he says, "remember?" Maurice sits on the ottoman in front of the recliner where Joline's mom puts up her feet.

"How's Joline?" she asks. "You two haven't been messing around while I'm at work, have you?"

"We don't have that kind of a relationship," he says.

Joline's mom sips her beer, then runs her hand through her hair, pushing the loose strands from her face. She kicks off her high heels. "Massage my feet, Maury," she says. "They really hurt tonight." Maurice can't refuse. She doesn't ask often, and it only started a few months back one weekend when she came home from work a bit tipsy. Maurice likes the feel of her warm toes, the way they wiggle in his hand when he squeezes them. He puts all the care in the world into his massages, as if somehow her feet might lead to something more.

While he holds her foot, she tells him about her day, how many drunks pinched her ass, how much she made in tips. Maurice doesn't like to hear about the drunks but is glad she makes enough money for her and Joline to get by. He knows how everybody in the town seems only to get by and wonders if there can be a better way. He sees his father go to work at IBP and come home each night, cow blood on his pants, on his shirt, bits of bone in his hair. Joline's mom likes to talk about winning the lottery. She plays her Powerball numbers twice a week. "The first thing I'm going to do when they write me the check is get the hell out of here," she tells him.

"Where would you go?" Maurice asks.

"Some place far away," she says. "Maybe Canada or something."

"It's real cold up there," he says, giving her toes an extra squeeze. "How about Florida?"

"It's where all the truckers are from, places like Tallahassee and Gainesville. With all those bugs, rednecks, and old people, Florida would be the last place I go. Why would anybody in their right mind go to a place like that, Maury?"

"They have Disneyland, the Magical Kingdom."

"A swamp is no place for dreams," she tells him.

Maurice wonders if she thinks he says dumb things, if his black nail polish and dyed hair bother her. Mostly, she doesn't seem to care, has never said anything about it. Maurice knows he paints his nails mostly to piss off people. At first it was something different, something nobody in town ever thought of doing, something that separated him from everyone else. He knows that once he gets out of town he's not going to waste his money on polish and dye. He figures the best way to take off might be in Joline's mom's Mustang. He wonders how he can convince them to leave with him, because there could be no other way. He knows once they get on the road that everything will work out, and if it doesn't, they can just drive to another town. As for work, Maurice is an experienced burger cook, Joline works a register, and her mom can hustle drinks. "Let's drive out of town tonight," he says, but Joline's mom like her daughter has fallen fast asleep. Maurice kisses her foot and places it softly on the ottoman so as not to wake her. For a moment, Maurice thinks hard about taking the Mustang keys from her purse and blowing off down the county highway, maybe all the way to Goodland, until he thinks of how bad things would be for her and Joline if he took their car. He kisses both women on the forehead and leaves out the back door.

Late at night, when the whole town seems like it'll never wake up in the morning, Maurice enjoys walking the streets back home. The air from the north is crisp, not like times when it comes from the south, smelling like rotting beef. Maurice wonders how his father can stand working at the plant day after day, week after week, because he knows nobody must ever get used to the smell or all the killing. At this late hour, as long as the wind blows from the north, it seems, if only for a moment, that he has the entire world to himself. He likes to walk down the yellow line in the middle of the road or up the wrong side of the highway. Off in the distance, he can hear the trains rolling across the prairie, thinks about how far they'll go and how long it'll take. He figures he'll write a poem about it some day and he'll use the word "boxcars," because when you repeat "boxcars" over and over you get the sound of that train at night out there where all that tall grass grows in the darkness.

Tonight, like all the other nights in the past few months, seems like it might never end. Tomorrow, if he goes to school, he knows the football coach will say dumb things like "hustle for more muscle" and Joline will insist that chewing gum helps keep your teeth clean. His family will talk about his black hair and nail polish at dinner, and all the frozen burgers at Sonic will need to be flipped twice to make sure they're cooked in the middle. Then, like all the rest of the afternoons for many years to come, he'll wait for Joline's mom to order her sixty-four ounce Big Gulp with two cherries. That's when Helen will appear before him. In her armor of brushed gold, she will lead him out of the burning city on her wild mustang. She will take him to the top of Hegarty Hill, where he will stand with her on the highest stone before the darkness of the universe. Then, praying Newton is wrong, he will lean with outstretched arms into that strong prairie wind, listen for the low frequencies of the universe, and wait for the currents to do their lifting. □

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JOHN LUTHER ADAMS

The Place Where You Go To Listen

"Songs are thoughts which are sung out with the breath when people let themselves be moved by a great force, and ordinary speech no longer suffices.

When the words that we need shoot up of themselves, we have a new song."

—Orpingalik, a Netsilik Eskimo elder

THEY SAY THAT she heard things.

At Naalagiagvik, The Place Where You Go To Listen, she would sit alone, in stillness. The wind across the tundra and the little waves lapping on the shore told her secrets. Birds passing overhead spoke to her in strange tongues.

She listened. And she heard. But she rarely spoke of these things. She did not question them. This is the way it is for one who listens.

She spent many days and nights alone, poised with the deep patience of the hunter, her ears and her body attuned to everything around her. Before the wind and the great sea, she took for herself this discipline: always to listen.

She listened for the sound, like drums, of the earth stirring in ancient sleep. She listened for the sound, like stone rain, as rivers of caribou flooded the great plain. She listened, in autumn, for the echo of the call of the last white swan.

She understood the languages of birds. In time, she learned the quiet words of the plants. Closing her eyes, she heard small voices whispering:

"I am uqpik. I am river willow. I am here."

"I am asiaq. I am blueberry. I am here."

The wind brought to her the voices of her ancestors, the old ones, who taught that true wisdom lives far from humankind, deep in the great loneliness.

As she traveled, she listened to the voices of the land, voices speaking the name of each place, carrying the memories of those who live here now and those who have gone.

As she listened, she came to hear the breath of each place—how the snow falls here, how the ice melts - how, when everything is still - the air breathes. The drums of her ears throbbed with the heartbeat of this place, a particular rhythm that can be heard in no other place.

Often, she remembered the teaching of an old shaman, who spoke of *silam inua*—the inhabiting spirit, the voice of the universe. *Silam inua* speaks not through ordinary words, but through fire and ice, sunshine and calm seas, the howling of wolves, and the innocence of children, who understand nothing.

In her mind, she heard the words of the shaman, who said of *silam inua* : "All we know is that it has a gentle voice like a woman, a voice so fine and gentle that even children cannot be afraid."

THE HEART of winter: She is listening.

Darkness envelops her—heavy, luminous with aurora.

The mountains, in silhouette, stand silent. There is no wind.

The frozen air is transparent, smooth and brittle; it rings like a knifeblade against bone. The sound of her breath, as it freezes, is a soft murmuring, like cloth on cloth.

The muffled wingbeats of a snowy owl rise and fall, reverberating down long corridors of dream, deep into the earth.

She stands, motionless, listening to the resonant stillness. Then, slowly, she draws a new breath. In a voice not her own, yet somehow strangely familiar, she begins to sing. . . □

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That summer when we were looking for something, we used to congregate at the Big House at South Point. We'd come down off the highway straight toward the coast, then along the small roads of Maryland's Eastern Shore dotted with vegetable stands where we'd buy fresh vegetables for dinner, corn and tomatoes and watermelon, and then we'd keep driving south until we reached the pillars that announced the estate, then down the driveway through the rows of elms, down the hill, to the end of the Point, curling to a stop and parking at the Big House's double front doors.

The host of the parties, a young man named Chris, lived in the mansion, so it was his in practice, but it was the legal property of his grandfather, a former U. S. senator who had walked out of the house one day with his wife and died in a car accident on an icy road in New England. The tragedy left the house, the pier, the boathouse, the tennis courts, the elm trees, and the lawn suspended between owners. Chris's father was the only heir. He might have said that he was letting his son live in the house in order to keep it heated in the winter and dry in the summer; everyone else figured, correctly, that it was Chris he was keeping out of trouble. What Chris's father didn't know was that Chris lived there because he had inherited his grandfather's senatorial elegance, and though he was only twenty years old, he was already displaying the charisma of an older man, and he'd come to need the Big House, as it was called, as a tragic keep for his precious magnanimity. That was why he resisted all efforts to sell the house or demolish it, and why, no matter how far he traveled, he always came back. His father, a small-town lawyer, was undecided: he hoped that if the house would blow away in a hurricane, Chris would finally go to college. For Chris, it was the only place he'd ever loved. You could imagine him camping next to the wreck in his van. So the tale, if there were one to be told, was about family duty and geographical piety, an epic poem whose unraveling strands you could sometimes glimpse but never fully understand, particularly if you weren't from the area.

Often it wasn't what we'd come for, but for some of us it was enough to marvel at the long rambling two-stories of the house. The insides were remarkably preserved, a museum to the man who'd owned it. Everything that had hung on the walls and rested in cupboards was as the way he left it when he walked out the door that day in January. The photos of him with the President, with Frank Sinatra, with John Glenn, with the Governor, with Nelson Mandela. The study's executive desk studded with pens and festooned with miniature flags. The sunporch off the master bedroom lined with hatboxes. The shining tools in the breezeway. China dinner sets, heavy and awkward silverware, stemware, thick starched napery: the accoutrements of a fine life. World Book encyclopedias, 1960; stacks of *National Geographic*s and *Life*; liquor in the bar. The closets in the long upstairs hallway had stacks of matching towels with embroidered borders, and all the beds in the eight bedrooms where we slept were covered with thin cotton blankets.

When you inspected it for the first time, you expected to trip over velvet ropes. You expected to encounter elderly docents snoozing in the corners. But the husk of the house still kept a presence—you half-expected to hear the senator's booming laugh as he whipped up the driveway in a convertible.

But there were no ghosts. The house was ours.

We were fishermen, lifeguards, t-shirt stand operators, waiters and waitresses, phone operators, motel managers, dishwashers, gas station attendants, boat mechanics, newspaper reporters, chefs, fishing boat captains, ferris wheel operators. We lived in Berlin, Ocean City, Salisbury, Rehoboth, working just for the summer or staying all year round, in small inland apartments or mooching off friends and family. For us, the Big House was a getaway, a retreat, from the thousands of tourists from Baltimore who stripped off their clothes and took

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Beyond the Point

A Story by Michael Erard

their vacations sunburning on the beach, asking a lot of questions, drinking beer, and spending their hard-earned money, giving it to us, or rather, to our bosses. We weren't only looking for a break from these jobs; amidst the luxury, or what was by then a luxury remembered, we lived out our fantasies. Chris's invitations were more than to visit, but to live, and prodigally; we responded to his magnanimity, not by visiting, but by staying, participating, finding in one or two nights the generous amounts of world and life that had been disproportionately allocated by the universe to the house on the bay.

Some of us harbored anarchist dreams. The revolution had been unleashed, and we were partisans living off the fat of the toppled aristocracy. We had invaded Martha's Vineyard, Bethesda, Beacon Hill, Farmington Hills, La Jolla, Newport, whatever area we associated in our minds with large houses we could not enter and would never hope to own. Sitting in shorts and sandals, drinking beer in rooms appropriate for Kennedys, we imagined that we had always deserved such splendor and had now come into our own.

Still, we never destroyed anything, except perhaps symbolically. Rock and roll was appropriate: thrash bands, Grateful Dead cover bands. Once a second-rate Baltimore guitarist in tight Spandex pants played dinosaur licks at dinosaur volumes late into the night in the living room with French doors open agog and the furniture pushed aside and the foundation shifting imperceptibly and the nematodes contorting in their tunnels in the walls.

We ate sit-down dinners at linened tables, if the group were small, eating off the china with the heavy silverware and drinking wine out of crystal goblets. We used cloth napkins. We toasted each other endlessly. We piled watermelon seeds in empty butter-dishes. We were drunk before dessert. No one thought about dessert. Who had room? So we drank more beer to cleanse our palates. We lounged around the table and talked, each with one fist apiece on the table. We were playing at something; we had taken something for now that we might never have again; but this, also, wasn't what we were looking for.

In the salt-damp mornings we woke up whenever we did, untangled ourselves from whomever we'd ended up sleeping with, and went down to the kitchen to make coffee and begin cleaning up. The pans from a dozen cooking projects, the stemware and the china, filled the double sinks. We sipped coffee and rolled up our sleeves and started the hot water, worked through the piles of dishes, the first za-zen of the day. Someone had remembered doughnuts; these we ate with the coffee while other people, now friends, took our place at the sinks. Other people filtered through, reappeared, and helped or did not; sometimes we hadn't remembered when they had come, sometimes we did not remember meeting them at all. The mornings were already hot, that early, as we cleaned up, and when the kitchen and the dining room were rearranged and wiped down and the furniture in the living room pushed back into place as if in anticipation of a caterer who would later in the afternoon set up for the senatorial reception that evening, we prepared to swim or sail or go crabbing off the pier.

Those mornings, Albert, the black caretaker, who lived in a shack next door, would come over to collect beer cans. He had been left behind by the senator too, and no one knew in Chris's family what to do with him either. Because we wanted to help, we collected the cans from around the house and piled them on the counter in the kitchen, and then he came and bagged them and brought them to his shack and washed them and set them out on the crumbling tennis court to dry. When we had the patience to throw crab traps into the water, his young son, a boy nine or ten years old, would come by and we would give him a few crabs, what we could manage, only two or three—we weren't catching too many ourselves. Albert was thin and his teeth were

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NANCE VAN WINCKEL

On Different Shores

Laboring slowly up the new brickwork bridge,
white oxen lay a trail of black dung.
In their steps the sculptor sees his own
weary plodding under stone. All spring
wild grapes have ravished his last year's
statues—torn their cheeks, pocked their groins
so recently lopped free of their penises.

Under the maker's hands in a secret vision
a huge granite woman rises from the sea,
her lovely face wreathed by flickering stars.
Her feet a hundred fathoms down
among garfish. Boatloads of strangers bob
by her immense thighs. They call to her.
Their thousand languages have names
for her, and the volume of salutations
ripples the water.

broken. His presence reminded us that we enjoyed our luxuries at a cost, that our egalitarian weekends were incomplete dreams. But we hadn't come to the Big House to be reminded of truths that had been denied in the senator's time.

You didn't drive all this way to pretend that you were rich or to realize that you weren't. And you hadn't come so far just for a party. It was more than that. At the Big House, you had to touch all the dark poles of your emotions, your fears and elations. If you didn't achieve this, you had to be sad. This will not last. This is beautiful. It had an awful transience, and telling about it the morning later was talking into a void. At a point, all talking dissipated; there was no one there.

In our time that summer, other friends took the time to lounge by the indoor pool. Couples slumped in the moldy cushions of the furniture, weaving unresolved incidents into relationships. They were looking for connections with other people. Do you remember when she told me? Well you know why she was saying that? It's because he had gone over there when she had just. And so that's when it happened.

Some of us braved the mosquitoes and took off our clothes at the end of the pier and swam naked in the warm shallow water of the bay. You could stand, your feet in the soft mud and your unwitting toes uncovering clams, and you could walk into the bay for a mile. Enclosed by the water, you could find what you were looking for.

Sometimes there were dozens of us there. Once maybe a hundred, though it would have been difficult to count all the heads drifting off their individual or paired ways past the limits of the glare of the Big House's spotlights, moving away from the land and the buildings and the costs and the pains, moving away from the dishes in the sink, away from the angry landlord, the waves of summer tourists at the beach resorts, the misunderstanding boyfriend, the elusive girlfriend, the rattly car, the possibility of school you couldn't afford in the fall, and a million other responsibilities of our civilized lives.

We moved with a singular idea in mind, away from the elctrical light. Returned to amniotic baths, naked as we'd come. This was what we wanted.

We moved even further out, where the plankton and jellyfish live, we waved our hands through the water at our sides and activated the million diamond points of the bioluminescent plankton, the supernovas of jellyfish which were as large as golf balls, scattered explosions of light we could not feel in the dark water because they gave off no heat.

We were as numerous as plankton. We'd been looking to become multiple for a long time.

If you didn't start over like this, you'd misunderstand your life's vividness, which was always about to begin.

From the water, like creatures in the water, from somewhere beyond time, we watched what people remained in the house moving in the windows. They seemed very far away. They seemed like the last part of a bad idea that you wanted to forget, except that it was part of the experience to remember the idea's failure, in order to be able to say that you'd learned from your mistakes.

If you didn't disperse, you wouldn't know what it meant to be together.

So we waded out further, by ourselves or clinging to another person, further and further, beyond the last of the floodlights' softened glow, beyond ennui, beyond anticipation, toward the places where we wanted to be, in the lapping dark seamed with glitters above and below.

There, like legions of God's angels, we thought about life on earth, and we were sad together. □

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Sparklers on Your Digital Sundae

PERRY GLASSER

O.K., SO YOU HOLD in the highest contempt the corporate hoopla that make up this grand old country of ours, and you've sworn never, never to succumb to the tsunami of manufactured hysteria that surrounds us with marketing hype as water embraces fish, but kids are kids and who are you to be the meanest parent on the block? So when your Timmy or Tommy or Joe-Bob reached three or four, you gave in, loaded the van with assorted neighborhood children and down to the mall's ice-cream parlor you went. You paid for a dozen others, but you got that free birthday parfait. The servers did three-part harmony on "Happy Birthday," the photo of the kid showing more chocolate sauce on him than on the sundae becomes a favorite, permanently ensconced in the acrylic photo cube on your desk, and forever you remember that the sparklers were not near as bright as the light in your kid's eyes.

Forty-eight weeks later, you shook your head in wonder when you found the blue postcard in the mail, a reminder to come on down any time that month to pig out on ice-cream again. (Girls received a pink postcard, and dutifully you noted that obnoxious but thoroughly predictable distinction.) You went, dropping a few dollars more into the great corporate maw. What the hell. Birthdays. Ice cream. Where's the peril here?

Fifteen years go by, you wish instead of that stupid earring in his nose and the tattoo on his ankle your boy had an active sense of moral indignation, but you are generally pleased with him as he has committed no felonies you know of and when he drinks to excess he refrains from operating heavy machinery. So one fine afternoon you are disturbed no little to learn that the Selective Service Administration, a bureaucracy invented during Lincoln's administration as an improvement over impressment gangs, an organization that has done uninterrupted business since shortly after Woodrow Wilson campaigned victoriously on a promise to keep us out of war, the very bunch that assigned Arlo Guthrie to the Group W bench for being a litter bug, that same happy band is warning your boy-o that despite the absence of a good, solid land war in Asia, registration nevertheless remains a legal requirement..

You ask how his name rose to the top of the hopper? It seems that the SSA has done business with a marketing firm, and it seems the marketing firm has done business with the place that wanted to be your neighborhood ice-cream parlor. All those Tiffany lamps, the singing servers, the jimmies on top, the sparklers—at the end, for a few pieces of silver, they forked over the blue birthday list of kids grown too old for freebie sundaes. (The SSA at this juncture in history has no interest in the pink list. Just give them time.)

Now, before you fling this issue of *The North American Review* across the room (a response all good, provocative magazines take pride in periodically generating from their readers) and pronounce Glasser to be (once again) a raving paranoid with visions of digital lunacy, let me assure you that the scenario above is more than feasible. Feasible? Hah! We are talking, actually-it-happened fact! You want fiction, look elsewhere in these pages for fiction—no less true, just less historical.

The ice-cream vendor was Farrell's, a company that converted a worthless computer file of birthday data into a genuine asset that brought in a bit more coin. Sure, there was a marketing firm that acted as an intermediary. So what? When the SSA showed up with a check, sparklers and birthdays be damned!

IN OUR DIGITAL AGE, service is the chief source of economic activity. Information about where, when and how to best perform that service has become, like pork bellies and dental floss, a commodity itself. Sure, Farrell's sold you ice cream, but you could have purchased ice cream any place. You were in Farrell's because along with maraschino cherries and whipped cream they sold you a rare and precious ambience—the illusion that you and your darling boy were more important to them than the next dollar.

Digital marketing of information on individuals, a kind of data gathering and dispersion not possible until just a few years ago, raises a new ethical dilemma. Who owns your data? Who *should* own your data? Your birthday may be your birthday, but *knowing* it is your birthday—that, friend, these days, is fair game. And unless you have plans to move to Irkutsk, change

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your name, abandon your Social Security and Medicare benefits and subsist, like Tom Joad, on whatever you can steal, you'd best get used to the loss of ownership for the knowledge of yourself.

Let me explain.

Unless you have been hunting and gathering for two decades, you no doubt have seen those funny bar codes that seem to be on any and all purchasable items—books, cans, doilies and even the cover of your favorite literary magazines (Go ahead and flip to look: I'll wait). In all but the smallest Mom and Pop stores, laser beam scanners are ubiquitous, and from that technology has sprung an industry that does more than prevent cashiers' errors and liberate stock clerks from endlessly pasting tiny price tags on Campbell's Soup. Unless told to do so, computers never forget. At the cash register, once your tally is finished, the details of your purchases at the speed of light are forwarded via telephone lines to the company database. Lights blink, tapes spin, chips glow—and the data, irrevocably, is stored.

Burgers, fries, milk, cufflinks, lumber, red rosy underwear or candy apples, we're talking about a process measured in microseconds, fast enough that at some stores you'll receive a cash register receipt imprinted on the reverse with discount coupons for products that compete with those you bought, a ribbon of advertising space for which you can be sure those sellers paid dearly. You bought Crest? Colgate on the spot wants to print you an offer for $.025 off your next purchase of their toothpaste.

But back at the database, before you can push your shopping cart to your automobile, the computers run ten thousand market-basket analyses, analysis that not only examines what you and every one else bought that day, but that examines the frequency with which items are purchased together. From patterns of purchases come store floor-plan strategies, those decisions to put certain items on display at check-out lines, near or far from each other, or on shelves at adult or toddler shoulder height.

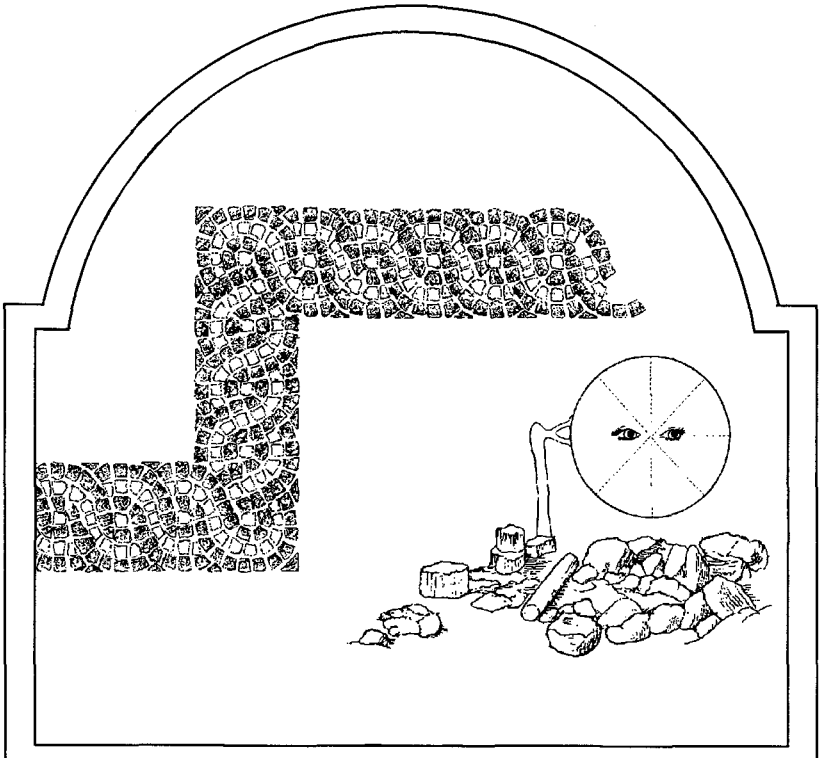
SO NOW YOU KNOW why the milk is way the hell away from the bread, on the hope that while you schlep through the place you'll make an impulse buy or two.

Granted, no one needs a computer to deduce that the question, "You want fries with that?" is a good selling tactic, but if you were running a national chain you'd love to know the buying patterns that indicate the optimal moment to move the goods around the store floor when seasons change from region to region. You'd love to know which products are selling in Spanish-speaking zipcodes, which do well with women with incomes above $45,000, and which products are not selling at all, because armed with that information, you can better manage your trucking and inventory operations and save millions.

You'd pay gold for that information.

In fact, you do. Big bucks.

With logistics and inventory operations cut lean, you can sell big



July 4 Samsun,Turkey

Byzantine history is idolatrous; it loves illustration. Iconoclasts, on the other hand, held that the most important things are uncircumscribable.

In the meager Archæological Museum on Atatürk Bulvari, there's a large mosaic floor with vignettes from the myth of Thetis, each of which has its own gorgeous border. So far, not much of ancient *Amisus* (*Samsun*'s name in Greek, Roman, and Byzantine times) has been excavated. Anyway, little will have survived intact. It was sacked so often. Now the site's inside a restricted military zone; one imagines a training ground for U.S.-armed Kurd-killers, littered with shards.

from ICONOCLASM IN PONTUS by M. Kasper

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screen TVs and peanut butter in 10-gallon drums; you can sell picture frames and auto polish; you can sell shoes, ships and sealing wax, and though you can sell it all for 20 percent less than anyone else, despite lower prices you make the same or even more profit per unit. That rich flow of information gushing from your cash registers makes you very, very savvy.

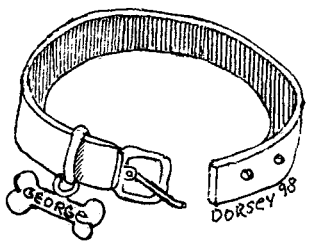
The next thing you know, suburbanites picket the projected site of your next store because they fear the new traffic patterns—a terror that means only that your deals are so good people will drive long distances to buy your wares. And you know you have won the commerce wars when the local mall's retailers emphasize customer loyalty, swear they give personal service and fund flyers about the community's quality of life. Those are the signs of concession; the sure sign they know they haven't the chance of a cow in a Kansas City slaughterhouse of competing with you on price. As for those stores in what's left of downtown—awwgh, they went broke when they built the mall!

Well, who's hurt? I mean, how can anyone argue with better products being sold for less money? This is the American Dream. This is what democracy is about. This is why we march to John Phillip Sousa, why we oooh and aaaah to starbursts of fireworks on muggy July 4th nights while we barbecue a dog and quaff a beer, why we glow with *Weltschmerz* when on Christmas Eve the citizens of Bedford Falls bail out Jimmy Stewart, who has given them good-service at fair prices all his wonderful life.

That's right. No one need be hurt as long as all that transactional data is being maintained anonymously and perhaps applied by zip-code—but it simply isn't done that way. In the brave new world of digital marketing, the vision of Heaven has us wave a key at the gas pump or insert a smart card at Happy Burger and a machine will greet us by name, ask if we want the same order as when last we visited this point of sale-and once each year wish us a heartfelt "Happy Birthday." In our Digital Age, mass marketing will occur one customer at a time.

There's no opting out. Pay by check, pay by credit card, pay by any means except cold cash, and the chain of identity will run from the database to your wallet.

THAT'S WHAT'S NEW. That's why there is a market in information itself. After all, if after zumpteen years of having your credit card pay for groceries in Cedar Falls the database marketeers notice that suddenly that card is showing up in Orlando, they can likely make a buck peddling your name to a home improvement chain on the not wild probability that you've moved south and are in the market for a shower head, some plywood, and maybe a new hammer and nails. Did I say stalk the credit card trail? Heck, let's just ask Mayflower, United, Bekins, Allied and anyone else with an 18-wheeler for hire to sell us the names of their customers. Wait! Wait! Did I say "sell?" Naaaah, let's do an affinity marketing deal. We'll go partners with them. We'll let them persuade a customer to sign with them because we'll give the customer one frequent flyer mile for every mile they haul ass by truck-provided when they relocate they use our credit card. With the first bill, we'll enclose discount coupons to the home improvement chain. Every-body turns a dollar.



You ask, "So, what, Glasser, is your problem?" Consumers are making out like bandits, no? Cheaper prices, free credit cards and airline tickets. What's to worry, Glasser? You're raving, again. This is the triumph of capitalism, fool!

Well, yes, and that's what is worth worrying about. This stuff feels so good we are likely to lose sight of the fact that institutions and companies aren't famous for their clear grasp of ethical dilemmas. Remember the glint of the sparklers in your kid's eyes as he glommed that sundae, and try to understand that the grocery chain will either by intermediary or directly sell its list of shoppers who regularly buy beer and chips to health insurers that will then set rates accordingly. If that seems so heinous that it's a candidate for government regulation, ask yourself if a school board about to hire a teacher should have access to the person's video rental habits. How about Cub Scout pack leaders? When the sheriff shows up at the front door of Blockbuster with a subpoena for the desktop computer and all the records therein, what should the 17 year-old clerk do? Over at the drug store, with two or three queries of a database, we can garner a list of customers who have had prescriptions for alcoholism and depression. Before you scream, "Privacy!" think if you'd want to run that list against a list of applicants for engineers to run the railroad, pilots who will fly the local TV news helicopter, or drivers of the local school bus.

The data are already out there, amassing every time a scanner beeps. Computerized tools churn those data and transform them to information to be bartered and sold. Possessed by an organization, information becomes knowledge. Knowledge is the basis of action. And wisdom . . .where is wisdom in this?

Who owns all this information? The person who accrues it? The people who buy it? The person it is about? Try telling a credit rating agency you'd like them to no longer give out information about your financial habits. See if you can buy a house. Or a tent. Or a shanty to share with someone who looks too much like the Unabomber. Who owns all there is to know about you and all there is to know about me, and when can we say, "Stop. No sale!" □

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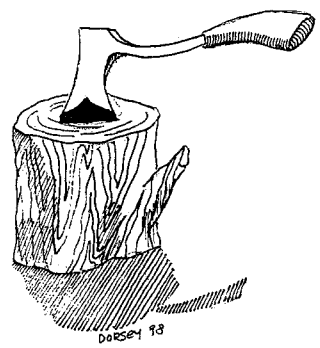
Backyard Nature

NORMAN LAVERS

SUNDAY, MAY 18: Obviously the time to begin a backyard nature diary is January 1st. It's the beginning of a new year, and everything is dead and quiet. A time to get your bearings, when everything is at lowest surge, and then, day by day, to mark the rebirth of the natural world. May 18th isn't anywhere, neither the beginning or ending of anything, and in about as medias res as you can get. Well, May 18 is as close as a disorganized person can get to starting on January 1st.

Here is where we are: Last year in the spring we had the poorest movement of monarch butterflies through here I can remember. We were really worried that there had been some disaster on their Mexican wintering grounds. Monarchs don't have what I would call a true migration, as birds have, where an individual bird nests somewhere in the northern hemisphere, migrates south for the winter, then—that same individual—migrates back up north in the spring to nest again. With monarchs, as I understand it, a final generation hatches out in New England and southern Canada in the fall of the year, and migrates the several thousand miles to their traditional mountain valley in Mexico (we get a good movement of these monarchs through our neighborhood in northeast Arkansas in what is called the Mid-South, in September). After overwintering, these monarchs fly back north as far as the Gulf, where they lay their eggs on the emerging milkweed plants—then die. Those eggs hatch, become caterpillars, become chrysalises, then emerge as monarchs, who fly a bit farther north with the maturing spring, lay their eggs and die. And so on, generation by generation working their way back up to the North-East, where the final generation of the year then flies back to Mexico for the next winter.

We are one stop on the way. Each year, just as the first milkweed shoots show themselves above ground, the monarchs come streaming through from the south, mating and laying eggs. Our whole thing is not to be eco-parasites, enjoying all the different species of butterflies, for example, but doing nothing whatever to maintain or increase their populations. So we have not only planted nectar-bearing flowers to attract the various butterflies and moths, we have also deliberately planted foodplants for their caterpillars. For instance, for the gulf fritillaries and the variegated fritillaries we have planted passion flower; for the black swallowtail parsley and bronze fennel, for the bumblebee hawkmoths red honeysuckle, for the giant cloudless sulfurs partridge pea, and so on. For the monarchs we planted butterflyweed, a handsome milkweed with flat-topped sprays of bright orange flowers, which attract with their nectar several species of butterflies, but attract monarchs specifically to lay their eggs. The milky sap in the leaves is distasteful for all but the handful of insects that have specialized in the milkweed, and all of these, the various milkweed beetles and milkweed bugs, the milkweed aphid, and quintessentially the milkweed butterfly caterpillar, the monarch itself, have learned to eat this plant without taking in the toxic milk directly, but instead sequestering it in their tissues, harmlessly to themselves, but rendering themselves poisonous or distasteful to other creatures. So the defense the milkweeds use to keep from being eaten, these specialist eaters of the milkweed have taken over as their own defense against being eaten, and all are bright orange and black in coloring, warning colors to birds and insects to leave them alone. The yellow and black caterpillar of the monarch carries on its distastefulness into the adult monarch (warningly marked black and orange), and the inexperienced young bird that samples one monarch will not eat another, and will not even try a probably very tasty and nourishing viceroy butterfly, because the viceroy mimics the warning pattern of the monarch.



We planted the butterflyweed for the monarchs to lay their eggs on, but when they did, and their voracious caterpillars began chomping up our handsome butterflyweed—especially when they adopted the habit of biting halfway through the stalk that had all the flower buds on it, so that the milk would leave that stalk, making it slightly less distasteful to them themselves, and we saw what would have been beautiful flowers droop and die and finally be devoured—we felt a conflict. We wanted the monarch caterpillars, and we wanted our beautiful orange butterflyweed flowers.

So I went up along the railroad tracks in front of the house and dug up some purple milkweeds (an

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abundant plant) and planted them in the flower border down our driveway. They did well. They grew up into four-foot tall plants with big round balls of deep rose-colored flowers, but nevertheless they were big clunking weeds, and when the caterpillars appeared on our delicate butterflyweed, we had no compunction in picking them off and sticking them on the commoner and less graceful species of milkweed. Especially after the purple milkweed had established itself in a couple of years, and began running shoots underground, and coming up everywhere, squeezing more precious plants out of the flower border. In fact when this spring dawned, and we saw how many purple milkweed shoots were coming up, we thought we had a problem on our hands.

BUT AS I STARTED by saying, last year's spring movement of monarchs was frighteningly small. However the fall migration south to Mexico was substantial, so we relaxed a bit. Then this spring they started pouring through early, and they came north with the strongest movement we had ever seen, and the purple milkweed shoots (which had come up ahead of the butterflyweed) were dotted, even crusted, with tiny pearl-like eggs.

Here was a second problem. Because even when the monarchs laid their eggs on our milkweed, and as much as we agonized over them eating up our choice butterflyweed, the truth is in past years we hadn't produced very many monarchs. Though in their yellow and black poison colors they should have been proof against predation, our caterpillars disappeared day by day. Something was getting them, maybe a combination of somethings. Maybe there was some bird that didn't find them distasteful, though we never caught one in the act. There is a large red Vespid wasp that, I know from observation, feeds its young entirely on caterpillars, and I suspected they might have been a predator of my monarchs. And one day I was watching two very tiny, newly-hatched monarch caterpillars when I noticed a small jumping spider was also watching them, and quickly, before I could intervene, this cat-like spider had stalked the closest, and suddenly jumped, catching it in his fangs. The spider immediately let it go, evidently realizing it tasted bad—but the caterpillar had already been fatally bitten, and after thrashing around a moment, dropped limply to the next leaf below. Meantime the spider, having learned nothing, jumped on the second caterpillar, where the same thing happened. Two dead in two seconds.

This is the problem with starting my diary well into the spring of the year. It has taken me this much time just to set up the present day. I am not quite done: this year we decided we would have a more efficient monarch factory, so we carefully monitored the monarch eggs each day, and about the second of May we noticed they were hatching. We couldn't really see them hatching, but we noticed the tenderest new leaves in the whorl at the top of the growing purple milkweed shoots were getting chewed up. At that point we went to the two half-grown milkweed plants that had had the most eggs visible on them, took a scissors and cut them off level to the ground, then brought them into the house and jammed them into the top of a wine bottle filled with water. The narrow neck of the wine bottle, that barely allowed the stems to be squeezed in, was perfect. The water would keep the plants crisp and fresh for the caterpillars to eat, and the narrow neck would keep the caterpillars from falling into the water in their usual brainless way and drowning. We put the bottle over a sheet of white paper. With a hand lens, we could just see the tiny hatchlings, clustered inside the whorl of the tender unfolding new leaves at the top of the stalk.

That was about the 4th of May. In the next couple of days we could still barely find the tiny caterpillars, but the tiniest dust of their droppings was beginning to become visible on the paper we had put beneath.

Then they began growing, and as they grew, the droppings increasing daily in size, they chewed, and as they chewed, they began to demolish the plants. Soon their black and yellow banded accordion bodies were readily seen, and soon the original two stalks were chewed to the nub and we brought in three new ones, adding a new bottle, and placed them tight up against the denuded old stalks, so they could crawl onto them. (They were still too tiny and fragile to be moved by hand.)

Then, shedding their skins each day, they got bigger and bigger, and we brought in four new stalks in two bottles. We did a preliminary count of the caterpillars, and got up to around forty-three.

But we began to feel like the sorcerer's apprentice, because each day they had chomped down to the bare stalk all the plants we had brought them, and had grown another increment in size, and soon it was a feeding frenzy, each leaf covered with fat caterpillars an inch-and-a-half long, chomping audibly now, thrashing their heads back and forth when two mouths met, each to assure the other he was not a continuation of the delicious leaf, a little ticking rain of square droppings falling and bouncing on the paper below.

Now the milkweed stalks coming up all over our front border, that we thought would be such a problem, were beginning to look endangered, as we cut plant after plant. Some of them were beginning to get flower buds, and they would make handsome big balls of rose-colored flowers, very attractive to bees and other insects. It seemed a shame to cut them. But the caterpillars were gorging and thrashing their heads and looking for more. By this day, today, Sunday the 18th of May, we were getting a little frantic, the two-inch-long caterpillars wedged side by side on each leaf, devouring the leaves with deep side-to-side cuts of their jaws, shaving back the leaves visibly with each bite—when something happened.

They were near to what we

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WHAT IS THE MEDIA SAYING ABOUT ORLY?

The Phil Donahue Show
"Orly is a unique personal matchmaker..."
Ron Reagan Show
"Orly, born a matchmaker..."
Sally Jesse Rafael Show
"Orly's service is designed for the professionals..."
AM Los Angeles Show
"two of Orly's clients were married live on the show...The wedding of the year"
Eyewitness News (ABC)
"Orly, world renowned matchmaker..."
KTLA Morning News
"Orly, matchmaker in action..."
Jewish T.V. Network
"Orly is a real marriage broker..."
Montel Williams Show
"Orly's clients are the créam de la créam..."
AM Philadelphia Show
"Orly's clients are simply top of the line..."
Cleveland Tonight Show
"Orly, a touch of class..."
Orange County News Channel
"Orly is champagne wishes..."
AM Northwest Show, Oregon
"Orly the one and only matchmaker..."
Good Evening Seattle Show
"Orly is an investment in your future..."
The Dimi Petty Show, Canada
"Orly has a sixth sense..."
National Enquirer
"Orly has a dream date for you..."
Orange County Register
"Orly has a match for the sincere singles..."
The Heritage Weekly
"Orly is nationally and internationally known..."
Los Angeles Times
"Orly matches the rich and successful..."
Dallas Morning Newspaper
"Orly made countless introductions..."
Beverly Hills Today
"Orly is the Rolls Royce of matchmaking..."
KFI Talk Radio
"Orly, a matchmaker with a sixth sense..."
WLAC Nashville Radio
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thought maximum size, and in bottles touching their milkweed stalks we had placed a forest of bare twigs from tree clippings, and one of the caterpillars had wandered out onto it, affixed himself with silk by his tail, and suddenly let go so he was hanging head down. Then another and another was hanging, so that by dark tonight half a dozen of the still thirty-odd, probably close to forty caterpillars (they were hard to count) were hanging, and I guessed that under cover of darkness tonight they would shrug out of that final skin like someone removing a wet bathing suit, and by morning would be sparkling green and gold-flecked chrysalises. And since they were all pretty much of a size, within the next day or two perhaps all would be chrysalises, and our food crisis would be over, and we would wait for the next crisis, which is that all would emerge without distortion, dry out properly, and take wing from our yard. It would take about ten days in the chrysalis, I guessed, trying to remember from when I had done this last probably several years ago.

Interestingly, of all the dozens of eggs and caterpillars we had left outdoors on their growing plants (because remember we had only brought in the eggs on two plants out of two or three dozen), I was hard put to find four or five caterpillars, and none were the size of the ones we had in the house. So we had clearly done the right thing to increase our output of adults.

Other things of course were going on all this time. Notably, yesterday we had gone on the field trip with the local Audubon Society to Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge, our favorite place around here, and in a magical moment had stood on a levee overlooking a ditch and watched at leisure, from close up, a Swainson's warbler, a species we have only glimpsed once or twice before, as it foraged through tangled vines over the water. Once it hung from a vine, reached its long pointed beak into the water, and plucked out a tiny pond snail. Overhead, Mississippi kites, in threes and fours, were swooping about, locking claws, and giving their two-note whistles, evidently in courtship.

And today our neurotic cat Ellie went racing out the front door and instantly pounced on a quite large (for this species) rough green snake, and Cheryl was just quick enough to pick her up and pull her away from it, before she had done it any harm. These fine delicate snakes, though very common, are seldom seen, even by us who watch out for them. They are the only member of the tropical vine snake group to extend upwards into the temperate region, though unlike the green mambas and some others, they are quite harmless.

MONDAY, MAY 19: When we went to bed last night there was one chrysalis, the wrinkled up caterpillar skin on the table below it, and six more hanging caterpillars. This morning when we got up, there were eight complete chrysalises, and two more that had gone awry, perhaps not fastened properly, so the chrysalis, in one case, and the hanging caterpillar in the other, had fallen splat on the table. But the successful chrysalises, in their green and gold, shaped like an amulet, resemble exquisite pieces of Egyptian jewelry. Among the other caterpillars only a handful were still eating, and the rest were wandering around, either on the plants or on the bare sticks. Two or three were on the table walking about. The smaller ones of those we put back on a green leaf, the larger we put on the sticks. The sticks were jammed into the top of a wine carafe, but that still left a narrow opening down into the carafe, and one or two brainless caterpillars were constantly wandering down into the bottle. It occurred to us that if one of these made his chrysalis inside the bottle, when he emerged as a butterfly, he would no more be able to fly out than a ship could sail out, so we waited for a time when the bottle was clear, then stuffed aluminum foil into the opening. This evening when we got back from grocery shopping, half a dozen more caterpillars were hanging. I expect they

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had been ready to all day, but it is strategic for them to wait until late in the day to begin changing, since they are obviously very vulnerable at this time, and the more of it they can do in the dark the better.

We have looked at the calendar, and we may be on a trip to Cahokia around the time we expect them to emerge, so we will need to figure out what to do in that event, perhaps put them outside in a sheltered spot. The problem is, we want to know how many we have successfully fledged, and we will need to be present to see that.

When we got home after this dull, but warm and humid day of intermittent rains, we realized our tortoise had not been fed all day (yesterday we let him out to browse the lespediza in the lawn). So I got him out of his little house in his backyard pen, and gave him a banana and two big strawberries, which he relished.

By the pond I saw a Libellula cyanea, a handsome dragonfly, make its maiden flight, its bright yellow stigmas, the point at the node of each wing, shining like headlights.

On this day I mowed most of the lawn (before I was interrupted by rain) and we planted most of the plants Frank gave us yesterday. We notice the Queen Anne's lace is now blooming in our yard, and down the road edges. We could hear our neighbor to the south mowing his lawn. When one neighbor mows, all the others are honor bound to mow. That indirect communication is all that is left between us and this neighbor, whose views and actions are so opposite to our own.

TUESDAY, MAY 20: This morning when we wake: sixteen chrysalises, eight hangers, and five still chewing. Later in the day, Cheryl discovers two more chrysalises hanging under the table (caterpillars that had fallen off the plants and wandered off without our seeing them), and she accidentally steps on a second caterpillar on the floor. I check the milkweeds down the driveway outside the house before I go to work, and notice a few milkweeds showing signs of being chewed, and I see two or three small caterpillars, and two or three largish ones. There were many more eggs outside than the few we brought in, so this is a pretty sorry showing. We did get one more piece of the puzzle as to why we don't raise more outside. Though they are supposedly distasteful, I know some things do predate them. I saw an adult monarch, one year, caught in the web of a big Argiope spider. I remember its powerful wings beating against the restraining webs, but it was unable to break free. The spider came over, wrapped it up in silk enough to control the wings so it would do no further damage to the web then, without having bitten it, cut it out of the web and dropped it to the ground. It had learned that monarchs are inedible. But in the same year I saw a monarch land on the tip of a twig, then try to fly, but for all its flapping it seemed to be unable to get airborne. When I came closer to investigate, I saw a praying mantis had caught it, and, using its strong arms to hold the beating creature away from it, was calmly eating it, starting with the head ganglion, so that the monarch was quickly stilled. While I watched, the mantis, with no sense of eating something bad, ate the entire head, thorax and body, dropping only the warningly colored orange wings to the ground beneath it.

But the question was, what was eating the caterpillars? Cheryl came out to the flower border during the day and saw a caterpillar hanging, but it was hanging limply. When she looked closely, she could see a tiny bug was holding it, a bug much smaller than the bulky caterpillar, but evidently its beak injected something strongly poisonous to disable the caterpillar, and the bug was now spending the entire day sucking it dry. The bug was orange and black, and though subdued, these might have been interpreted as warning colors. We had just been speculating about whether there was such a thing as a milkweed predator, a predator who could prey on the creatures that fed on milkweed, by somehow itself sequestering the toxins. This seemed in a way unlikely, because each caterpillar would concentrate the toxins, and then the bug, as the top of the food chain, would further concentrate them by eating the caterpillars, just as the peregrine suffered most from its diet of passerine birds who had less lethal doses of DDT in their tissues, because it concentrated the poison of several birds in its tissue.

When I got home at five, the bug, a kind of ambush bug, was still holding the caterpillar, and when we searched around a little, we found a second bug holding a caterpillar, so it was not a chance case, but rather, an active monarch caterpillar predator. So that, the jumping spiders, and possibly those red wasps, though I had never caught them in the act, and possibly some birds, though again I had never seen them. And for that matter, possibly some baby mantises (there are several in the yard at this time) predating the hatchling caterpillars, though again, no witnesses.

By tomorrow I expect most of the remaining caterpillars will have made chrysalises, and the final number ought to be around thirty. Not too bad: we started with around 43, two miscarried going into the chrysalis, two got stepped on, and half a dozen much smaller ones, a generation behind the others, seemed to be getting crowded out of the feeding spots, and seemed a bit weak, and were constantly falling on the table, and these we took out and released back to the outside plants. If we can get these all to emerge in good shape, and release them, this will be pretty good production from our small yard. I will be surprised if three or four hatch out outside, and even that would be a banner year compared to most years.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21: This morning all but three were either chrysalises or hangers. We found another one that evidently had fallen on the floor, walked across the dining room, and affixed himself to the wall behind the CD case. That was

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a hazardous spot, so we razored him off and did our best to glue him onto a stick.

We left the house early for Memphis.. The brand new butterfly house at the Memphis Zoo had opened, though not yet to the public, and as zoo members, we got to go to a preview. There were two small long buildings in series with peaked roofs covered only with a fine mesh. There was a path down the middle, with raised beds planted on either side with milkweed and dozens of other butterfly attractive plants. Giant swallowtails were drifting about everywhere, and zebras and julias and monarchs and gulf fritillaries. Hanging to the walls were luna moths, promethias and others. There were giant southern whites and cloudless sulfurs and palamides and spicebush and pipevine and zebra swallowtails, and others I can't remember, all drifting very lazily as though on Valium, perhaps because they were captive reared and never had to be alert for predators. (A bad idea because little kids going through could not keep their hands off them.) There were screened cases with rows of chrysalises in them—monarchs, zebra swallowtails, various whites, zebras, giant swallowtails, large moths. A man was spritzing them, pointing out that his humidity gauge was only showing about 47. Perhaps we should spritz our monarchs. He also showed us how they used a glue gun to put a dollop on a pin, and then hung chrysalises to the pin by sticking their cremaster to the glue. The whole could then be pinned to a wall. The swallowtail chrysalises, we noticed, were pinned upside-down, but he said it didn't seem to matter. We noticed that all their plants were pristine (they are only just in the process of opening) but we looked at the milkweed (ten or twelve feet off the path in the raised beds) with our binoculars and could see eggs and some small caterpillars. How are they going to feel when their beautiful plants begin to get eaten? I expect they will feel some of the conflict of purpose that we feel with ours.

Other good sightings at the zoo: a baby spectacled bear; the crested screamers with two tiny downy young, like yellow ducklings. One parent was touching its bill to its own preen gland, then grooming one of the chicks; in the bird house the spectacular capped pitta (New Guinea) was out in the hallway, and with the help of someone else, we sort of guided it back into its flyway.

When we returned home, the very last of our caterpillars was making the little silken pillar he would shortly hang himself from.

FRIDAY, MAY 23: We have ended up with 35 chrysalises, not bad going.

The pink roses climbing on the fence ("seven sisters") are in full bloom; the white wild roses are going over; the orange day lilies in the ditch along the front of the house have sent up bud stalks. I believe they usually start blooming around the 1st of June. We have planted two more crossvines (courtesy of Frank), plus a pink honeysuckle, a golden chain tree, and two Japanese knot trees, which, when Frank told Cheryl the name, she thought he was calling them Japanese snot trees. Also we have planted a Kentucky coffee tree back by the pond. All from Frank. We still have a buckthorn to plant, though we haven't decided where yet.

MONDAY, MAY 26, Memorial Day: Threatening rain this morning when we eat breakfast out in the backyard (we have most of our meals in the backyard these days), but it then blows over. There had been, according to the radio, a 40% chance of rain this morning. We have recently heard how this is calculated, and it was nothing like we had imagined. All the cloud and humidity and wind and temperature factors in our region are put together, and then the computer makes a search for all the times in the past when there was something like this particular configuration, and evidently four out of every ten times there was this pattern in the past, it rained.

The prediction for tonight is for strong thunderstorms. We'll see. Our plan is, at around five, to drive over to Mack and Hervey's for dinner, and then to stay overnight, then the next morning early to drive up with them to Cahokia, the giant Indian mounds, and explore that area for a day, stay overnight, and get back here sometime Wednesday afternoon. We suddenly see how we are tied to our house: (1) first we asked Tim to come and feed our cats. He will have to keep Ellie and Fen inside, since Fen can't be trusted to stay in the backyard without our watching him, and Ellie can't be trusted to stay out of the sun without our oversight—she is a scrawny pink-skinned white cat who gets sunburned and is now old enough she is developing skin cancers. We have recently had to have her ears amputated, giving her a ferret or mongoose-like appearance. (2) We asked him also to put out some lettuce leaves for the tortoise, but if it is going to be belting down rain, probably we should move the tortoise into the house, since his house in his pen gets very muddy, and if he sleeps in the mud all night, he might be subject to respiratory problems. (3) Most problematic, I inspected our monarch chrysalises this morning, and though they still appear bright green, if I look at them carefully, I can easily see the orange wings with black stripes rolled up inside, an indication that they are not far from emergence. The day before they emerge, the chrysalis will become entirely transparent, and will therefore suddenly look dark. We'll make our final decision just before we leave this evening. If they have become noticeably more transparent, perhaps we'll have to put them in a sheltered place outside (although the possibility of violent thunder storms makes that problematical). We could put them in the open garage, but they might all fly to the window and beat their wings to pieces trying to get out. If they have not changed any further by the time we are ready to leave, I think I will take a chance to keep them in the guest bedroom where they are, the door closed so the cats can't get in,

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the curtains closed so light is dim, and just let them emerge if they are going to, and hope they will wait more or less patiently in the room for us to open the window for them. It will be a shame, having brought them this far, to mess up now.

FRIDAY, MAY 30: Last night before we went to bed Cheryl heard and saw what she at first thought was a bat beating at the window. I opened the window, and an immense polyphemus moth flew into the room. We had a good look at it, then turned off all the lights, and I gently put it back out the window and closed it. I was impressed by how tough and leathery it felt when I took it in my hand.

This morning, four more monarchs had emerged, but the day was dull with rain in the forecast, so we left them in the room. A good thing. This afternoon we had a terrific lightning storm and over an inch of rain fell very quickly, drowning everything and leaving standing water throughout the yard. The farmer husband of an acquaintance of Cheryl's just last week made the expensive decision to flood his rice fields, then we had the two inch rain Tuesday, and today another inch, and his levees are broken.

I came home from work and brought in the tortoise. He was inside his little house, sitting in an inch of water. When is the rain and cool going to end, of this wettest coolest spring? I have read that this is probably going to be an El Niño year.

SATURDAY, MAY 31: This morning, in addition to the monarchs that had emerged yesterday, there was one more new one out, and nearly all the remaining chrysalises had turned transparent, meaning they would emerge sometime today. But a worry was, it was cool, windy, and threatening rain, a very dangerous time to put a fresh tender butterfly out, so I kept the room dark and hoped for the best. By noon, nearly all of the monarchs were out, hanging from their chrysalises and drying out their wings. The day was still cloudy, cool, and breezy, but with tiny bits of sun, and the wind moderated. So I took out the original four from yesterday one by one, and the one that had come out first in the morning, and set them on a sturdy plant in a sheltered spot, and most of them shortly flew up and away. By about five-thirty, the day not too bad, and two or three more hours of sunlight for them to sort themselves out, I set outside all those monarchs that were no longer hanging to their chrysalis, but were scattered about the bedroom. In the end I set thirteen on plants outside, eleven were still hanging to their chrysalises in the bedroom, and four chrysalises remained that had not yet changed color.

After dinner we walked down the tracks to the switch and a little beyond. Half a dozen killdeer are going spare as we approach the road crossing, either with nests or young right there. We were by the bridge on the old tracks and looked east across the field—soybeans just emerging from the ground—to the tree-lined far side. "We ought to be able to see a fox or something crossing that field," Cheryl said. "Let's see," I said, and scanned it with my binoculars (Cheryl didn't have hers with her). In a moment I picked out a pair of coyotes loping across the far side, one about forty feet behind the other. It was just a little before dusk. We'll need to begin listening for them at night. When a train comes by in the middle of the night and sounds its horn, they begin yipping and howling in the field behind us. When it's a family party with all the kits along it's quite a chorus.

We walked back along the road, noticing lots of interesting reeds and rushes and any number of quite pretty grasses—none we could identify, since we've never really tried the grasses—and big stands of a giant evening primrose, and lots of Queen Anne's lace, and big stands of thistle. Formerly tall thistles grew along the railroad tracks and their nectar-filled flower heads were very important to the butterflies that seemed to use the railroad right of way as a migration path, especially the various swallowtails. But in the last few years, either because it's growing up along the tracks, and the ecology is subtly shifting, or because they've sprayed them out of existence, there are very few thistles any more. But here they are, along the road instead, at least this year. During the two years I studied butterflies intensively, trying to learn them and learn something about them, in late summer the tracks swarmed with butterflies, and I could easily count more than 25 species just in the walk from the house to the switch, and one day I remember in that distance counting over 100 painted ladies. In the last few years, butterflies have been rather scarce, though our yard was the best place around to see them, because of our flower borders, with our milkweed and zinnias and red

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sage and other plants designed to be attractive to them.

I looked at the maps today for the breedingbird atlas plots in Randolph County. Unfortunately most of them look like they are down on the delta, probably in boring agri land, though a couple of them have big rivers running through them and might be good. A couple of them, anyway, are in the Ozarks, so we will go check them out. I expect, now we have the maps, we are more or less obligated to do them. Anyway, that has spurred me to get out the boring ones we have left here in Craighead Co., and I got out my field notes, and tomorrow I will get up early and go do Cash. I did last year about an hour and a half on it, just getting the streets and boundaries down, and recorded 21 species. I think if I can get around 35 species, and some evidence of nesting for most of them, which I should be able to do in about nine hours, that will be enough for that barren total-agri wasteland (we are supposed to do fifteen hours on each plot). If I could get there at seven tomorrow, and work till twelve, that would be five hours. Then maybe I could finish it off with a trip late in July. This is one of six boring plots, so perhaps I'll do one like this every weekend from now on, or maybe on one morning during the week. Then on one day of the weekend, when Cheryl is free (though she suddenly has a bunch of painting commissions), maybe we can go check out some Randolph County ones (or possibly I can do them alone, to give her a chance to paint with the house empty).

SUNDAY, JUNE 1: I got up early and was on the site at Cash by 6:30. This is really a barren worthless area by my standards (it's possibly quite valuable agriculturally). It's all agriculture, no remaining woods of any kind, except for lines of trees down a ditch in one part. So it's just millions of redwings, mourning doves, and dickcissels. The top of the square goes part way into the town of Cash, and that was the best spot (common species nesting in gardens), especially as everyone was in church, so I could drive around looking suspicious, and park by people's yards and peer into them with my binoculars without getting too many stares. Interesting to find house finches there (this commensal species has in the last few years spread to the cities in Arkansas, invading the state from the east, and now is beginning to move into smaller towns), and two or three singing ringed turtle doves, probably spreading from Jonesboro, escaped from a pigeon fancier I know there. I spent five and a half hours, and it looked like I wasn't going to get much more, so I have finished that plat at 27 species, with twelve confirmed nesting, and another three probably nesting (I am meant to get over half the species either probably or certainly breeding). The next time I go out, I'll do Risher, just down the road from Cash, and probably just as crummy. Maybe I can finish it with just one long visit as well.

Cheryl, while I was gone, released the eleven monarchs. The cats were still hounded by blue jays when they went out, so we kept them in.

MONDAY, JUNE 2: Again up early, this time to take Scott and his German visitor Rainer, a bird watcher, to Wapanocca (Marion begged off to rest, exhausted from their traveling). It was cool and threatening rain, and very few birds were out, and there was much frustration for Cheryl and me trying to find him goodies. For instance, we were constantly hearing pileated woodpeckers close by, but never got a glimpse of one, or only when Rainer was looking the other way. On the other hand, because it was cool and dull he got good looks at a usually nocturnal barred owl. And he was thrilled with the beauty of the bald cypress swamps. We set up the telescope on the bald eagle nest, and as he was watching the young bird, the adult flew in, so they put on quite a good show. The other thing that Rainer loved was when we first entered Wapanocca and stopped by the weir, we looked below the dam, deep with water again after our heavy rains of the last few days, and enormous gars and suckers of some kind were almost shoulder to shoulder spawning. It was quite impressive to see, and Rainer spoke of the salmon he had seen in their spawning runs when he visited British Columbia.

That evening we went to a party, and when we returned around midnight, because I had had a lot to drink, Cheryl was driving. We came down Prospect, the last street before we cross the tracks at the switch and turn onto the dirt road and drive the final half-mile to our house. A policeman came out of a driveway behind us. "He's going to stop me for having one headlight out," Cheryl said, and sure enough, he did. Police here almost never bother people with one headlight out, so we were being selected. I picked up Cheryl's purse from the floor in front of me, and held it up so she could take her wallet out to get her driver's license. The policeman looked in the window, and was obviously more interested in me than in Cheryl. She promised she would replace the light tomorrow, and he said fine, watching me. I set Cheryl's purse back down on the floor, and he said "Why did you move your arms quickly like that? What did you put in your boot?" I quickly explained to him what I was doing, and it was then he said someone had tried to break into a house here, and I answered the description; then he asked me if I walked along the tracks a lot. I told him I did constantly, that we were bird watchers, and suddenly he remembered seeing me at some Game and Fish thing, and was much friendlier. It seems everyone knew who must have been the one trying to break in, because there was some guy with a big beard who was always walking on the tracks. This then, after living here twenty-one years as a professor, model family man, taxpaying citizen, was my reputation in my own neighborhood. □

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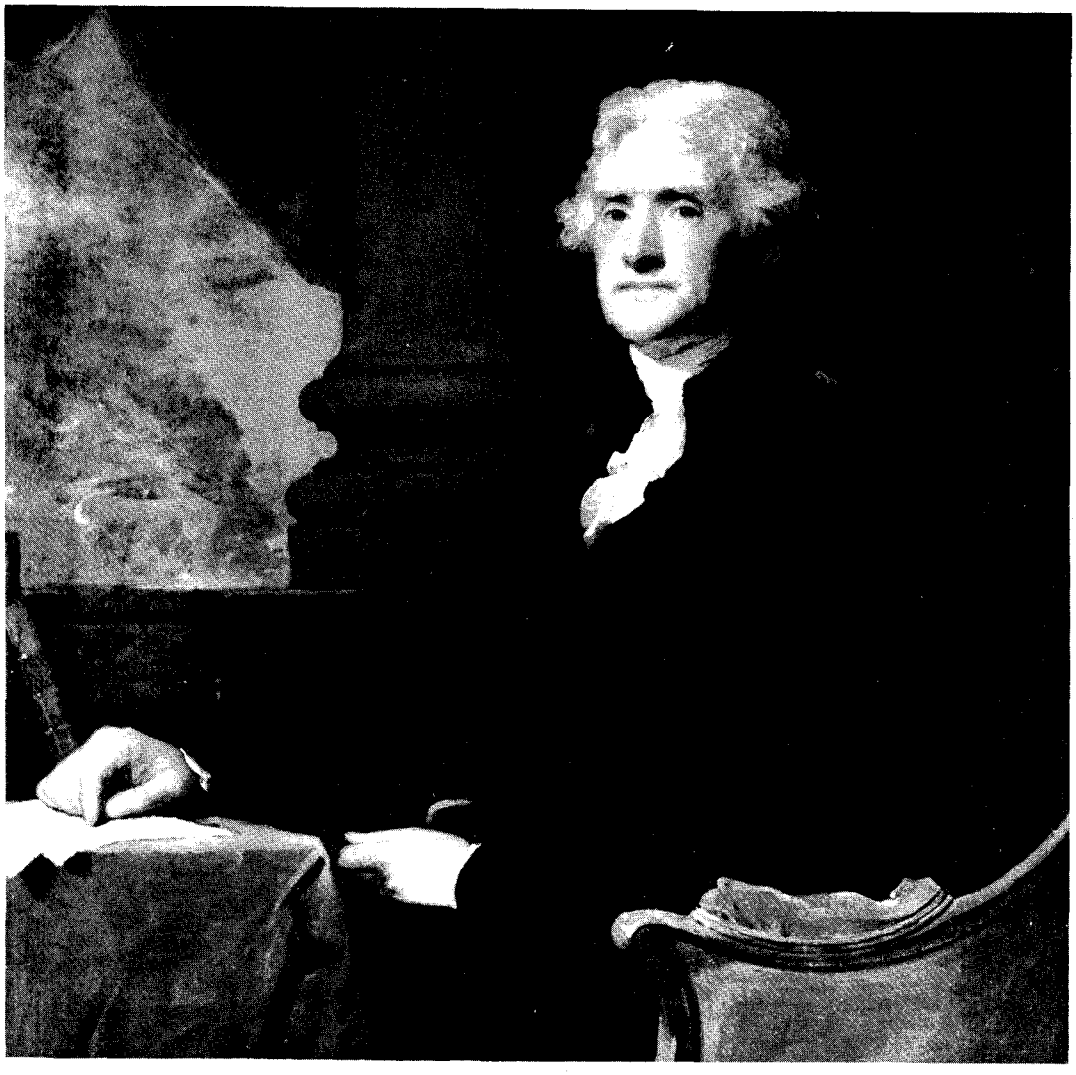

Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

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Th: J

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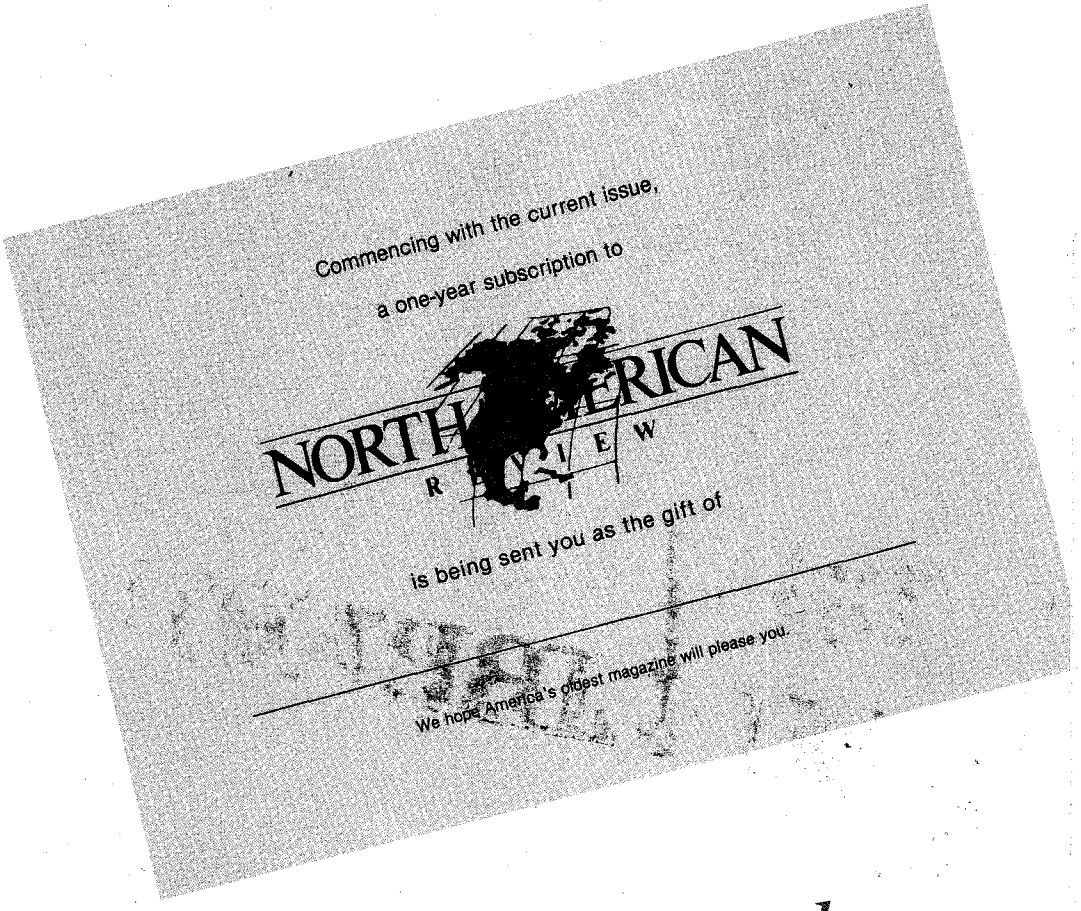
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